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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of four issues of a quarterly publication presenting information related to the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. Regularly appearing features of the publication include a calendar of Reggio conferences; information on the Reggio Children organization, contacts, exhibit schedule, and study tours; and a partial listing of resources related to the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy. The fall 2000 issue includes an article introducing the 2000 Reggio Children Summer Institute in the United States as well as articles on organization as a value within education, descriptions of how programs have changed as a result of their dialogue with the Reggio Emilia approach, and a review of the book "Reggio Tutta: A Guide to the City by the Children." The winter 2001 issue includes articles on adult relations in Italian early care and education and on creating a community for infants. The spring/summer 2001 issue includes articles on the role of participation in the experience of the Reggio Emilia infant-toddler centers and preschools, and on family and community participation at a Reggio program in the United States. The fall 2001 issue includes articles on the pedagogy of listening, the documentation cycle, and documentation and the art of teaching. (KB)

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Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Exchange, 2000-2001.

v8 n1-4, fall 2000 – fall 2001

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Innovations

in early education: ***the international reggio exchange***

ERIKSON INSTITUTE, WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION TO THE 2000 REGGIO CHILDREN SUMMER INSTITUTE IN THE UNITED STATES

by Amelia Gambetti

WHAT'S INSIDE

A Journey of our Process in Dialogue with Reggio Emilia

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Reggio Children Information, Contacts, Exhibit Schedule, Study Tours

Resources Related to the Reggio Emilia Educational Philosophy

The following is an excerpt from the introductory comments of Amelia Gambetti [Coordinator of Reggio Children and Liaison for consultancy in schools] at the 2000 Reggio Children Summer Institute in Boulder, Colorado in July. Amelia's words served to establish the context for the focus of this institute, organization seen as a value.

What kind of connections are there within a school that supports the value of the school as a system of interactions and relationships? What kind of connections are there between the organization of the environment and organization seen as a value, considering the strong statement that the environment is the second, the third or the fourth teacher in the classroom? What kind of connections are there inside an organization of time, space and a rhythm of actions? What kind of organization is there behind the hypotheses, the predictions and the researches which include the analysis of the children's work in order to follow projects and experiences in evolution? What kind of organization is there inside an attitude, an action and a concept of reciprocal listening? I wanted to use these questions in order to provoke our thinking and develop our knowledge, because if we learn to ask the questions, perhaps we will learn how to answer them together. With your collaboration during the time of this institute, we will explore the topic of organization seen as a value and we hope that we will satisfy our common expectations.

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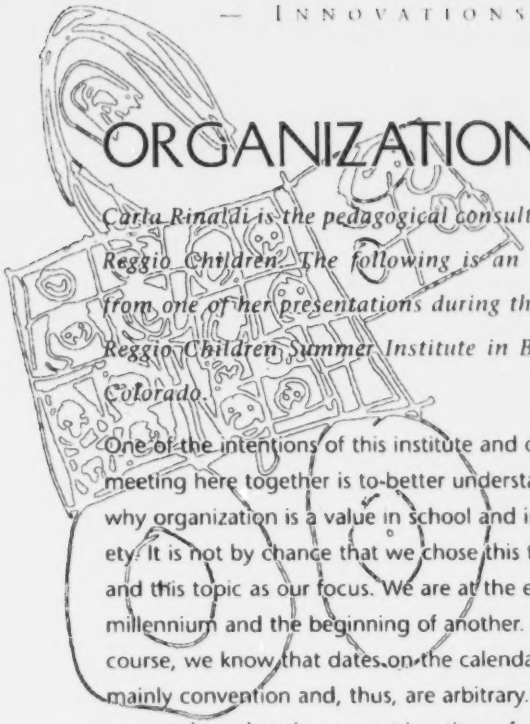

ORGANIZATION AS A VALUE *by Carla Rinaldi*

Carla Rinaldi is the pedagogical consultant for Reggio Children. The following is an excerpt from one of her presentations during the 2000 Reggio Children Summer Institute in Boulder, Colorado.

One of the intentions of this institute and our meeting here together is to better understand why organization is a value in school and in society. It is not by chance that we chose this time and this topic as our focus. We are at the end of a millennium and the beginning of another. Of course, we know that dates on the calendar are mainly convention and, thus, are arbitrary. But we cannot deny that the present is a time of great changes, a time of upheavals in the world of technology and, therefore, in the social, cultural and economic domains. These developments are possible because great changes within organizational systems are currently taking place. Many people think ideas change life and the world. But I think that we should reflect on the possibility that what really produces change is not only ideas but also organization. I am convinced that each new idea is, first and foremost, a new organization.

Organization and organizational systems not only support our belief in ideas, they also give shape to and produce ideas. Organization can produce new ideas because organization connects and, therefore, creates new concepts. New organization creates new ideas.

Let me give you an example that will help us explore this concept more deeply. Think about the computer. The computer is mainly an organizer and this organizer is changing our relationship with work and work itself, changing our relationship with others, our relationship with the world. So the computer is not only an organizer. In my opinion, it is an idea of the world *because* it is an organizer. Using the computer, you create new relationships. That means you create a new world.

School is also an excellent example. In the past and, especially, in more recent times, we have had the opportunity to learn about school programs and objectives in many parts of the world. Creativity, the rights of children, new knowledge and new roles of the school are widespread topics of discussion within many of these programs. But these discussions rarely result in efforts to modify a scholastic organization. If an attempt *is* made, many problems are encountered both inside and outside the school because changing the organization means changing the identity of the school. With new organization, one changes the essence of the school. That is more difficult to do and often people stop short of it. They are reluctant to take this step because changing the organization means changing the identity of one's role in the school and, therefore, of one's relationship with children, colleagues and parents.

Here is another example. In Reggio, we like to say the child is competent but it is not enough just to declare this. If we really want the child to be competent, we have to change time, space, roles and rules to permit this competent child to exist. So changing the organization of the school thus means changing our way of being, our way of thinking, our way of acting and our way of organizing our knowledge. Now let's explore another concept that could help us to have a deeper understanding of why organization is so fundamental in our lives. In order to better understand

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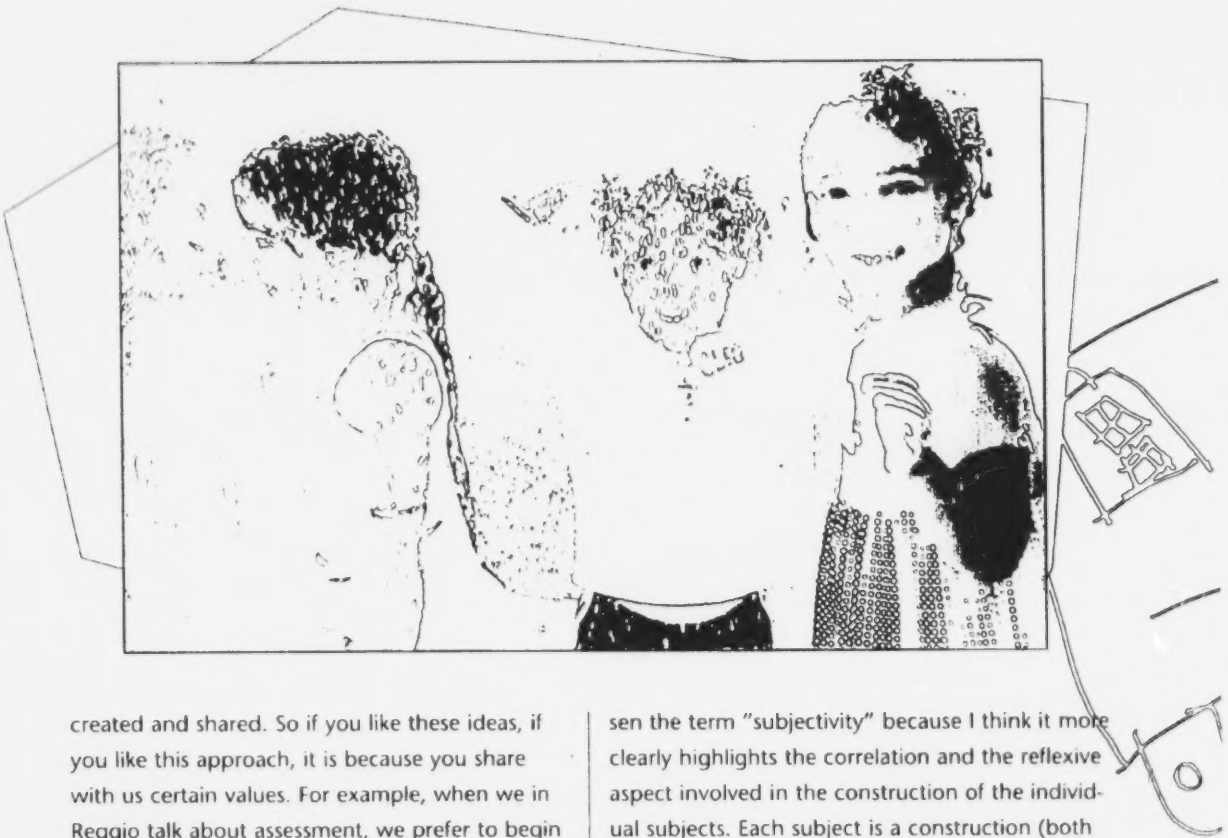
the relationship between organization and school, let's consider this question: What is a school? For us, in Reggio, school is a system of communication. When we use the word "system," we mean that each part is conceived in a reciprocal relationship with the others. The reciprocal nature of the relationship is a fundamental element of the concept of organization. Because of this reciprocity, if the relationship of one element with the other changes then the entire relationship within the system changes. Organization is the essence not only of the school but of every living and non-living thing in our world. Organization can change the quality of the relationship between individuals. For example, think about your daily life in your school and how by simply arranging chairs in one way or another, you are arranging the quality and the quantity of the relationship of the people in that space. Organization enables us to read the language of the space. The language of the organization communicates our intention for the space. We can understand others' intentions and ideas because of the organization. Again, it is not enough to say, "I believe that the child is competent." The organization of the environment in one's school makes it possible for the competent child to exist. Thus, organization is important not only for allowing ideas to exist but for creating ideas. Organization results in a different intention of communication, a different intention of relationship and a different concept of reciprocity. Organization enables us to think in different ways.

Organization results in a different intention of communication, a different intention of relationship and a different concept of reciprocity.
– Carla Rinaldi

I have used a metaphor in order to express how organization can change the quality of the relationships between individuals. But how do we ensure the quality of this reciprocal relationship? What are the aims? What holds it all together? In my view, it is a question of values. For us, school is a place of the organization of values, values that are not just an aim of the school but also a means. Values are not taught but are lived daily. Therefore, the organization of the school must make it possible to relate with others and with the world day-by-day through these values. But, what are these values? What is a value? Values can only be defined in relation to the cultural, political and historical context and are, therefore, contextual concepts. We must take responsibility for our values. Values come from us, from our responsibility to create them, to share them and to live them. We are the protagonists of these values. Another possible definition could be: values are the ideas and goals to which a person aspires to in his or her life. They serve as a point of reference according to which we conform our relationship with the community, society and culture. This is the definition of values that we like in Reggio. Values define cultures and are one of the fundamental elements of societies.

In Reggio, this question is the basis of our pedagogical action: What is our image of the child and of humanity? In reality, in that moment, we are asking: What is it that has value for us? What are our values? Values, therefore, are relative and correlated to the culture to which they belong. They determine the culture and are determined by it. Here you can find the reason why we cannot accept the Reggio approach as a model. Because when you talk about education, you talk about values. Values cannot be copied. They have to be



created and shared. So if you like these ideas, if you like this approach, it is because you share with us certain values. For example, when we in Reggio talk about assessment, we prefer to begin with reflection and discourse. What we do when we assess? In my opinion, we give value. The Italian word for assessment is *valutazione*, which means to give value to something. The school is a place of education, and for education, the placement of values is fundamental.

Now I would like to discuss some of the values that have structured our experience in Reggio Emilia. We ask you to deeply consider these values because talking about the Reggio approach doesn't mean talking only about the competent child or about furniture. It means to be a group of people, a group of colleagues and educators who try to share the same cultural values. These values cannot be copied but are lived. The first is the value of subjectivity which we view with wholeness and integrity, as a holistic value. I have chosen the term "subjectivity" because I think it more clearly highlights the correlation and the reflexive aspect involved in the construction of the individual subjects. Each subject is a construction (both self-constructed and socially-constructed) which is defined within a specific context and culture. We are talking about each of us, the children at school, human beings in general. Recent studies on the brain have clearly demonstrated the uniqueness of each individual and of his or her construction as a subject. This means that in your classroom, there are not 25 children but 25 different subjects. Each is different from the others and each is unique. Much is known about how the individual develops in relation to the environmental context and the strong influence of the quality of interaction on the destiny of each of us, particularly in the early years of life. The methodological implications of this value of subjectivity can be seen in our daily strategies, for example, observation and documentation, small group work, the organization of the space, the presence of mini-

ateliers and so on. I would like to share with you not only the final result, to tell you what you have to do but rather to share with you the reason why. I would like to underscore the importance of this value of subjectivity as defined by otherness. In my opinion, the relationship between subjectivity and intersubjectivity is fundamental, not only at a cognitive and psycho-pedagogical level but, above all, on the political and cultural level. We are talking about the political and cultural level because we are talking about values. I believe that this issue is vitally important for the future of humanity itself. The relationship between the individual and the others is a key issue for our future. To have the courage to choose whether our individual construction is independent from the others affects not only the traditional pedagogical, psychological debates but also those involving different images of the human being and humanity. It is a question of political and economic choices that can influence the entire educational system and also the social system. This is the reason why we talk about values. This is the reason why our concept of subjectivity refers to a human being that can be defined only in relationship with the others. Others are part of myself. You define me and I define you. We are interdependent. We are inseparable. Here we can clearly see how schools and, above all, pedagogy are not neutral but are partial. I'm talking about having the courage to break the culture of neutrality. In my opinion, education in school cannot be impartial, cannot be neutral because choosing values means to take the responsibility of values. To have the courage of choosing, the courage of listening, the courage of our difference means also to have the courage to remember that what we choose as a value is not the absolute truth. It is something that we believe we want to share with the others and we need the others. Values cannot be something that separates us but something that can help us to stay together. So our pedagogy in Reggio reflects, in many different ways, a whole set of values. One of these is the value of subjectivity and the value of intersubjectivity, the value of reciprocity.

This value of subjectivity which is based on the uniqueness of each individual is strongly related to the value of difference. If you say that each of us is unique, if you say that subjectivity is a value, you now are creating the value of differences. These are differences in sex, race, culture and religion, differences because we are individuals, because we are all different. Not only because we are male and female, Americans, Italians, Buddhist, Catholic but because we are ourselves. But difference in itself is not a value; it can become one if we are able to create in the school a context and a culture of differences. You have to have the courage to choose values and become responsible for these values. The value of differences is one of the best and most difficult. Differences involve commitment and hard work. In confronting differences, we encounter otherness but also "outsideness." Differences are painful and challenging. It's easier to cancel differences than to welcome differences. We are more attracted by equality, by that which makes us equal. But this is a big risk and, thus, the questions we raise are of vital importance. What do we make of the differences? How do we avoid the risks of homogenization, standardization? Are all differences acceptable? If not, which are not acceptable and why? What is the aim of an educational project that seeks to welcome differences? In order to standardize them so that the children do the same thing at the same time? Is this our idea of being respectful of uniqueness? What concept of equality are we developing in our school and in our life? Is it the aim to make everyone equal or to give everyone opportunities to develop their own subjectivity and differences

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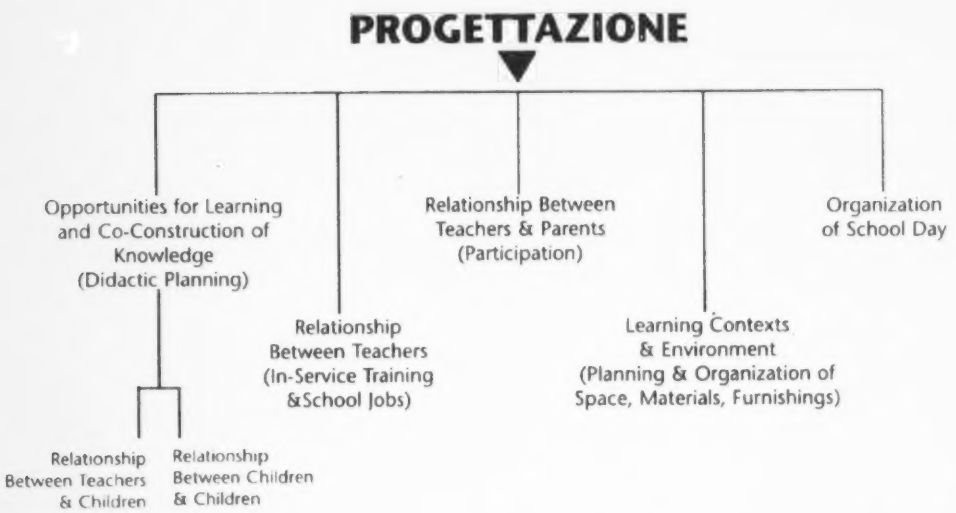
through interaction with others? These questions are of great importance on both the pedagogical and the political level. Western culture, in general, is experiencing a massive migratory phenomenon, the migration of people, races, cultures and religions. This makes this value of differences one of the most difficult yet one of the most important for our being a school of education. People tend to develop an attitude that certain others are less valued. In order to educate ourselves, we must try to understand the differences. This means approaching each individual with great sensitivity in terms of his or her background and personal story, children in particular. It means listening to the differences, and listening to and accepting the changes that take place as a result of our relationship and our interaction with the others. It means letting go of any truth that we consider to be absolute, being open to doubt and giving value to negotiation as an attitude of the possible. All of this can mean a greater responsibility and inclination for us to change.

With this definition of the value of differences, we find a richer, more contemporary definition of the value of participation, of participation as a value. In our educational experience, participation, having a sense of belonging, is not limited just to the families. What is fundamental to this value is a quality of school as a home. This is the reason why participation is one of the key concepts of the school as a system. Each part has to be part of something, to participate. This means a variety of spaces, languages, organizational methods and strategies that make this kind of participation possible. We constantly work at this in our experience in Reggio. It means that educational and pedagogical aims must be clearly stated but, at the same time, participation requires a certain sense of indefiniteness and an ample space for possibilities. Participation cannot be programmed; it has to be constructed in order to share meaning and to have a feeling of being part of the essence of something.

These reflections lead to another value which is part of our experience . . . the value of democracy which is already expressed in the concept of participation. The relationship between the individual and the community in which he or she lives can be oriented towards either protagonism or the delegation of responsibility. There are many, many ways of organizing democracy. This extremely important issue deserves at least a brief mention because we must not forget how close the school is connected to the society in which it is situated. The school is not neutral. The school is part of the society; it is defined by the society and it defines the society. Because we are teachers, we have the honor, the responsibility and we must have the awareness of being protagonists not only of the project of education for children but of the project of education of our entire community. This is the reason why we cannot apply method but we have to create education with our community, to create the school as a place of values, where values cannot only be picked, cannot only be transmitted, but have to be created together and lived together. This is the question of whether the school can be a place where culture is constructed and democracy is lived.

I would also like to mention another value which I feel is fundamental for us and is a founding principle of our experience, that is, the value of learning. Then there is also the value of play, the value of fun, the value of emotion, and the value of understanding our emotion. Fun and play are part of the learning process and part of knowledge building. They are not something different. They can be part of the same process of learning, the same process of knowing, the same process of


PROGETTAZIONE
Opportunities for Learning and Co-Construction of Knowledge (Didactic Planning)
Relationship Between Teachers & Children
Relationship Between Children & Children
Relationship Between Teachers (In-Service Training &School Jobs)
Relationship Between Teachers & Parents (Participation)
Learning Contexts & Environment (Planning & Organization of Space, Materials, Furnishings)
Organization of School Day

creativity. We are simply building a part of humanity when we are sharing these daily life experiences with our children. It is fundamental for our future to understand that creativity is a part of our way of thinking, not something that you can teach at school, having an hour of art once a week. This is something that we struggle to live in Reggio. We have found that values can offer us the possibility to interact with others. This is the reason why organization becomes a value. Organization makes ideas and values possible.

Perhaps now you can understand why we wanted to focus on organization as a value. This diagram [see diagram on this page] summarizes in another language the concept that I have tried to express to you. You can see the description of the school as a system of relationships between children, parents and teachers. This schema allows us to understand the concept of the school's reciprocal relationship with society. The concept of *progettazione*, that is, the concept of organization, means to understand and to try to qualify the school system as a system of interaction and reciprocity. The aim of organization is to be able to help each part of the system to be connected, to become aware of the interconnection and reciprocity of each of us with the others. Supporting the system's ability to develop relationships doesn't mean producing schedules. It means to create a context in which we can organize in order to offer opportunity for the learning and co-construction of the knowledge of the children. Note the relationship between teachers and children, and the relationship between children and children. Developing relationships also means to create a context in which we can support the reciprocal relationship between teachers through in-service training and school jobs. In the relationship between teachers and parents, it is essential to create a context and environment that could support the development of each relationship. We also have to think carefully about the core value of the organization of the school day and time; time is a value. What is fundamental is to remember that you cannot copy organization because you cannot copy values. What we have to think about, to share is the value of organization and the organization of values in order to develop a real educational system all over the world and that is the reason, among many others, why we are here.

A JOURNEY OF OUR PROCESS IN DIALOGUE WITH REGGIO EMILIA

by Mary Hartzell Rota

During a session at the 2000 Reggio Children Summer Institute titled, "Experiences in the United States in Dialogue with the Reggio Emilia Approach," five American educators shared their diverse perspectives, which served to emphasize the value of these summer institutes as opportunities for the early childhood community in the United States and Canada to share and reflect on their experiences in order to grow together as educators. Ellen Hall, Co-director of Make a Mess and Make Believe in Boulder, Colorado, presented about the process of working with children, teachers, families and the community to create a school which reflects the values of the Boulder community. Karen Haigh, Child Development Director at Chicago Commons in Chicago, Illinois, spoke about how the shared philosophy and organizational structure of their child development program has supported the professional development of staff members and the role of teacher as researcher. Barbara Acton, Director of Columbus School for Girls in Columbus, Ohio, shared a philosophical message about the importance of education for our future as well as a continuing project about light with the children at her school which explored children's visions of the future. Lori Geismar-Ryan, Pedagogical Director of Clayton Schools' Family Center in Clayton, Missouri, discussed the evolution of the teachers' reflective abilities while observing, interpreting and documenting the experiences with children, the participation of families in the process, and the essential contribution of the dialogue with Amelia Gambetti, Coordinator of Reggio Children and Liaison for consultancy in schools. The following is an excerpt from the presentation of Mary Hartzell Rota, Director of the First Presbyterian Nursery School in Santa Monica, California, during this same session. Mary Rota was a participant in the 1998 study tour to the Reggio Emilia Municipal Infant-Toddler Centers and Preschools.

> *I want us to be who we are. We can't be a Reggio school. We're not Italian. We're not in that culture. . . For us to be inspired by what they are, what they have to teach us and what they have done in all their years of experience is wonderful. But I think we need to be ourselves in our culture and try to enhance it by what we can learn from them.*
> *– First Presbyterian Nursery School teacher*

Origins of our relationship with Reggio

We became interested in the work in Reggio Emilia nine years ago after attending state and national conferences. After reading articles and *The Hundred Languages of Children*, we began making changes. We started with "safe "changes . . . beautifying the environment, creating a studio and hiring a studio teacher. We moved on to more challenging changes which took us out of our comfort zone, like restructuring the classes so the teachers and children would stay together from one year to the next. We started taking pictures and documenting the children's experiences. These were our beginning steps that prepared us for a deeper understanding of our work as co-constructors of knowledge with the children.

Summer institute in Ohio

In 1997, two teachers went to Reggio on a study tour and enthusiastically shared their experiences. But it was the first summer institute in Ohio that opened the door to continued growth. More than half the staff attended. A significant number of teachers now had a deeper understanding of the work in the Reggio schools. That made a big difference in our work together. We could begin to challenge each other. Carlina, Amelia and Lella, along with their colleagues, made a strong impact on our thinking. They spoke from their own experience of working with Loris Malaguzzi. At the end of the conference, I asked Amelia about the possibility of her visiting our school and she agreed to consider it. She came the following November. We were open, eager to learn and greatly challenged by her clear, provocative questions. Our commitment was to learn from her and from each other.

Working with Amelia

Amelia returned to work with us several more times and there was clearly a lot of work to do. During one of her visits, we agreed to walk through the school together to see what image was visible in our environment. We were enthusiastically expecting to tour the entire school. After a painful hour, we were still analyzing the patio. It was like seeing the world in a drop of the ocean. Her many questions helped us to see ourselves more clearly. There was so much to learn. Nothing was unimportant. Everything in the environment made a statement. Every word and action reflected the image we held of the child. Amelia is an uncompromising advocate for respecting the child. We were learning to listen to everything and everyone around us in a deeper way. This listening would teach us. We needed to slow down and focus. We needed to create an organization that supported our work together with the children and parents. We continued to question ourselves.

We took every opportunity to learn from others. We visited St. Louis and attended the summer institute and initiatives at "The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit at Mills College as well as local workshops and lectures. We began to interpret what we were learning into a meaningful context that respected our own school and community. We embraced the challenge to live a life of self-reflection, necessary if we are to offer children a true reflection of themselves. It is difficult to learn to listen. There is a great difference between being quiet and listening. Was there visible respect given to the relationships within our school? Only by reflecting together with each other and the children could we begin to explore that question. The staff has a strong professional commitment and a sense of community that has

developed over years of working together. During our annual staff retreats, we learned the value of group process. Although we all valued teamwork, we still had a lot to learn about collaboration.

Why Reggio?

We were drawn to the experience of the Reggio educators because their work resonated with aspects of our own practice, and we saw the possibility for greatly deepening our own work. In the mid-sixties, I taught in the early childhood unit at the UCLA laboratory school and understood the importance of team teaching and the teacher as a researcher. First Presbyterian Nursery School was already a socially and emotionally supportive community for children, parents and teachers, but that same vitality of process did not support the child's cognitive development and the rich life of the child's mind. Our interest in Reggio encouraged us to expand these possibilities. The connection with research on the developing mind and its relationship to interpersonal experience was exciting. Together we create our life stories.

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Children are powerful but it is easy for teachers and parents to rob them of their power in small ways everyday, with no intent to diminish their potential. Their curiosity and investigations are essential if they are to know themselves and the world around them. It is easy, as an adult, to feel superior to children and want to teach them what the adult knows rather than support children in discovering and constructing their own knowledge. Our dialogue with Reggio gives us a point of view from which to view ourselves. That is a very, very valuable gift . . . a gift of sharing the process and organization that supports life-long learning. It is a gift of respect, hope and freedom for all children and for our future.

Context of First Presbyterian Nursery School

Thirty-seven years ago, the First Presbyterian Nursery School was established with a strong commitment to both children and parents. I am the third director and have been there for 17 years. The school is located in the heart of Santa Monica, one block from a palisade that overlooks the Pacific Ocean. The activities of the city are all around us and every Wednesday there is a farmer's market on the street in front of the school. Diversity is a value and the children come from widely varied social, economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Twenty percent of the children receive financial aid. We have a morning program with an extended day available until 5:30 p.m.

There are five classrooms: one of 2 1/2 – 3 year olds and two each of 3 - 4 and 4 - 5 year olds. The children and teachers stay together every year and move to different classrooms each year. Each class has two teachers and three, if needed, to support the classroom. There is also a studio teacher and part-time science and music teacher. There is an office manager, receptionist and part-time assistant that work with me.

Where has the relationship with Reggio Emilia brought us so far?

We have made many changes in our environment on a deeper, more purposeful level. We looked at how the organization of the classroom promoted children's independence, thinking and relationships. In each classroom, the writing center, dramatic play area, block area, mini studio and parent area were evaluated for effectiveness by the entire staff. With the collaboration of parents, we

renovated our "big yard" to make it beautiful and capable of facilitating exploration. The redesign created a more natural, park-like environment for our urban school. Our "little yard," which is the entry into the classrooms, underwent changes to support the many and varied interactions that take place there. An outdoor pagoda became a welcoming entrance space, which can also be used as a studio, a puppet theater or meeting area. A large room upstairs was divided to created a lunch room, a documentation room and a meeting room with sliding doors which can be opened for large school gatherings.

We continue to look at how the organization of space and time can support the interactions and relationships of the children, teachers and parents. We reorganized our time with the children to support uninterrupted work, eliminate transitions and facilitate small group work. We continue to slow down and place value on each part of the day. We strive to see everything that happens as a

learning opportunity. We give respect to the children's right to share in the daily life of their classroom and their school. We reorganized our time to give respect to the importance of the daily journal and projection reports, supporting their visibility for the parents and for each other. The value of listening has become apparent through our increased attention to documentation.

Our staff meetings now have scheduled times for each class to share project work, documentation and meet in small groups. Additional paid time was added so teachers could meet together each day. We also gather briefly each morning in a different classroom so we start our day in relationship with each other.

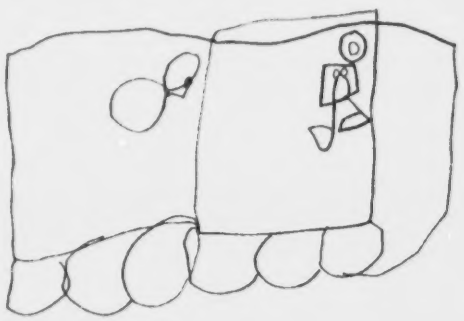
Each class has parent meetings when they share documentation in addition to individual conferences. The parent association provides many possibilities to be involved in the life of the school. We continue to build community through workdays, potluck dinners and picnics. Morning discussions on parenting issues as well as evening parent education meetings are organized with the families.

Has our relationship with Reggio changed our understanding of relationships and childhood?

It is always difficult to put what we are learning into daily practice. Living together with a respect for our differences requires that each of us examine ourselves, listen to others and reflect together on our work so that children might benefit. One of the difficulties we continue to face is the personal growth necessary for collaboration. Personal defensiveness and ego identification with our work can inhibit us from listening to other's reflections with an open mind.

The choices we make concerning our use of time continue to challenge us. We live in a very fast-paced part of the world and trying to "do more faster" can make real progress difficult. We are seeking depth and quality in our work and our relationships. There is no turning back once the journey has begun and so we continue. Once the image of the greater possibility was seen, it was no longer possible to be satisfied with the lesser.

As our work has progressed, our image of the child has been greatly strengthened. Children think creatively and express their theories with passion and joy, knowing they will be listened to and respected. The children's ability to work together has grown in direct proportion to our ability to work together. The value of small group work in facilitating exchange of ideas is clearly visible. It is the organization that has made this possible. Children are more competent and capable than we believed them to be. Through our expanded image, we encourage their growth and they, in turn, teach us in this reciprocal, ever-growing relationship. New possibilities continue to arise because the doors of our minds are opening.



The following are some comments of the teachers at First Presbyterian Nursery School regarding their perspective on our journey over the past nine years:

ABOUT CHANGE:

- *"I have to be a lot more open and try not to do everything for the children. I have to see what possibilities they can discover for solutions to problems."*
- *"We get to know the children much better than we used to because we can practically see into their soul. Now we have all this documentation that helps us to learn about them."*
- *"What has changed for me is probably the depth with which I look at my work with children. That's definitely changed . . . the image of a child, of myself as a teacher, and of families . . . the importance of the role of the family."*
- *"It's good to remember as a teacher at any school that you're not in it alone, that you don't have to do it all alone, that you have the parents. The experience in Reggio is very much about the family being very involved with the school."*

ABOUT THE IMAGE OF THE CHILD:

- *"The children know what they want to learn. They know they have all the knowledge within them. It's just a matter of bringing it out and learning how to do that. The children teach you how to do that."*
- *"When I look at the children, I see them differently than I did when I was a new teacher just out of college. We were taught that we have things to give to the children, that we supply them with materials, knowledge and ways of being. I see that so differently now."*
- *"The children can teach each other in a lot better ways than I can teach them. By helping them to do that, I'm acting more like a facilitator."*

ABOUT ORGANIZATION:

- *"I find that our work is better when I am organized. I not only organize the materials we might need, but I also make sure the camera and tape recorder are there so I don't have to leave the area. It helps me to focus and helps the children to focus more."*
- *"It takes organization to make it possible for the children to be part of setting up the classroom and deciding what's going to happen."*

ABOUT CHALLENGES:

- *"The biggest challenge is being willing to put my own weaknesses out there on the table and learn from them. That has been a very tough step in my own personal growth."*
- *"Giving up my own control in working with staff and collaboration have been challenging for me. I think that's been a really hard part for me because of who I am . . . or who I was."*
- *"I want us to be who we are. We can't be a Reggio school. We're not Italian. We're not in that culture. It's impossible. For us to be inspired by what they are, what they have to teach us and what they have done in all their years of experience is wonderful. But I think we need to be ourselves in our culture and try to enhance it by what we can learn from them."*

Reggio Tutta: A Guide to the City by the Children is the newest book published by Reggio Children. It is a portrait of the city made by the children along with essays, contributions and notes on the educational context. The following are the shared perspectives on this book by two American educators who were interns at the Reggio Emilia municipal preschools. Louise Cadwell is an atelierista at The College School of Webster Groves, Missouri and a consultant to the St. Louis-Reggio Collaborative, which includes The St. Michael School and the Clayton Schools' Family Center along with The College School. Louise was an intern in Reggio for a year in 1991 and 1992. She wishes to thank Lori Geismar-Ryan and Ashley Cadwell for their support in the writing of this review. Eva Tarini is a first grade teacher at the Crow Island School in Winnetka, Illinois and was an intern in Reggio during the 1992-1993 school year. The next issue of Innovations will feature a review of Reggio Tutta by Baji Rankin, the third American educator who interned in Reggio Emilia.

A REVIEW OF REGGIO TUTTA

by Louise Boyd Cadwell

Many of us find ourselves in the city of Reggio Emilia, Italy. While studying and learning about its municipal preschools, we may feel as if we have arrived at home in a place full of treasures that we have always dreamed of but never found. The treasures we encounter are richly layered and set our minds and hearts spinning and wondering and searching. For me, at least two considerations emerge . . . one is the impact of the culture and the other is the depth and power of the pedagogy. In *Reggio Tutta,* these two elements are woven together in a stunning tapestry.

The strongest and most important aspects of the Italian culture that I encountered were deep roots, ancient history, close community and a sense of centeredness. Reading *Reggio Tutta,* holding the book in my hands, taking in its images and breathing in its words, I feel a sense of longing and of nostalgia. Ironically, living in Reggio Emilia put me in touch with my own roots and my own sense of who I am in the world in a profound way. In Jerome Bruner's acceptance speech as honorary citizen of Reggio Emilia included in the essay section of *Reggio Tutta,* he says, ". . . let me tell you about my personal feelings, what it feels like to stroll around Piazza Prampolini, to visit the lions in Piazza San Prospero, to have coffee with friends. I have to tell you . . . that it feels like HOME! For the deepest secret of all is that Reggio manages to be both very local and welcoming, but also very universal."

Reggio Tutta is about the specific cultural context of Reggio Emilia, and all the details of young children's understanding of it. I am reminded when I turn its pages that as an American living there, I found a place that was intimate and ancient,

densely populated, welcoming to me and my family. I found a rhythm to life that was varied and lilting. Rushing stopped. Reflection set in as did enjoyment and appreciation of the subtleties of taste, texture, color and form. These are all perceptions that the children have communicated through their words and drawings, sculptures and maps. As Sandra Piccinini writes in her essay, "Playing with words and images in the city, seen through the sharp and curious eyes of young children . . . It is a kind of "warm" geography which, more than quantitative data, embraces the emotions and richness of children's existence on this earth in relation with others."

Living in Reggio Emilia for a year in 1991-1992 was an enormous privilege not only because of the experience that I shared in the schools with the children, educators and parents, but also for the opportunity to live with my family in a town with a center, where all four of us rode our bikes and rarely used a car, where we shopped at Teresa's fruit and vegetable stand and the neighborhood bakery, The Forno, a few steps from our apartment, where we ate meals together including lunch, and could stroll into the center of town for a gelato in the evening. This life felt more integrated, more whole, literally more centered to all of us than our life back home.

In his essay, "More and More Together and More and More Alone," Marco Belpoliti begins by reminding us that the traditional Italian city is centripetal and revolves around a central square and that cities in the "New World" are "ascending" cities with a downtown, midtown and uptown, or a multiplicity of places with no real center. Perhaps some of us, as American city dwellers, hold a distant memory of towns lived in as close communities with village squares and country stores where everyone knew everyone and "home" had a wide circumference. The year that we spent living in the Italian culture within the specific context of Reggio Emilia deepened my desire to create more connection, meaning and strong sense of place in my own life and the life of my family within our own reality.

Shifting from a focus on the Italian culture to the pedagogy that has evolved in the Reggio Emilian schools for young children, we recognize other treasures . . . a world of great possibilities and dreams for what human beings both young and old can be, become and create together in all corners of the globe. *Reggio Tutta* offers us a view into this world.

The view is of a pedagogy founded on inquiry and invention . . . a pedagogy of uncovering and discovering, of looking with fresh eyes, of listening with open ears, of building ideas and images together, each adding unique and critical points of view. A pedagogy with timeless values such as these for children and for teachers and for parents, we can admire and we can also learn from and grow with.

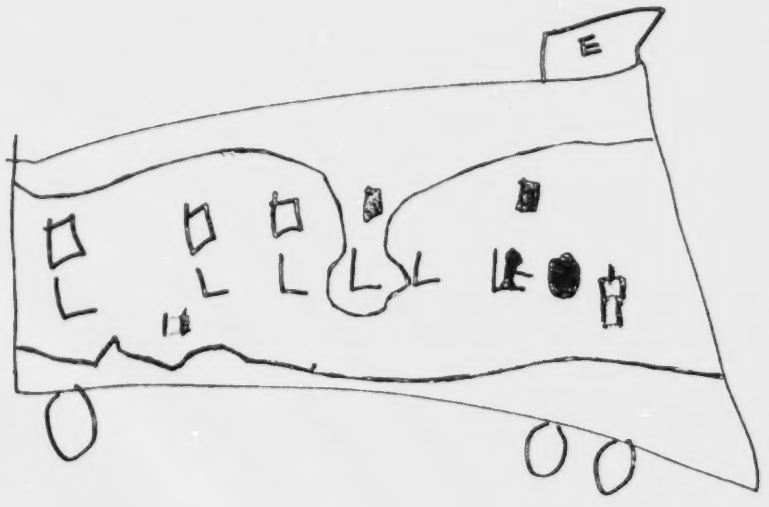
The heart of the book features the work of the children entirely . . . their words, drawings, sculptures, paintings and maps about their city, their home, and their place in the cosmos. This centerpiece, vibrant and appealing, page after page, subject after subject, reveals the children's perspective, the children's view, the children's understanding of their city. Maybe in reading *Reggio Tutta*, many of us will recall a simpler life, one where as children, we felt in love with the feel of places, the stories of our favorite places and the intimacy we felt with them.

By what means are we able to see the city from this fresh, remarkable and whole point of view of the children, filled with specifics and minute detail, full of sensory understanding and meaning forged by relationships with elements of everyday life, like the pigeons, the fog, the piazza, full to the brim with people and fabrics and food and hardware on market day, the dark dampness of the cathedrals, the splendor and gold of the theaters and the central goodness of meals around the family table? All this has become visible for us and for the children themselves and their families because of the relationship that the educators have built with the children in a school whose purpose is to support and sustain discovery, expression, rich imagination and vision.

The "bookends" to the children's work are essays by educators, writers, philosophers, politicians, architects and graphic designers all closely connected in some way to the work of the schools in Reggio Emilia. All of these essays offer us thoughtful analysis, divergent and multiple ways of seeing and considering "All of Reggio." The essays give us an historical and cultural commentary as well as original ideas that are complementary to the children's thinking and, at the same time, support us in appreciating the children's work with more depth of understanding. These educators and other professional contributors are researchers themselves, always seeking to further their understanding in creative and inventive ways and to assimilate new ideas about both the children and the city.

The final essay by Simona Bonilauri and Tiziana Filippini is particularly helpful in orienting us to the organization of the project on the city including specific questions used to spark dialogue with the children. This essay also helps us understand the myriad ways that educators considered the words and work of the children as they interpreted it and projected possibilities for the future.

Reggio Tutta is another great gift from our colleagues in Italy. It is a gift and, in the same breath, it is also a serious invitation to us wherever we may live to both move ahead with our own resolve to create schools where children and teachers thrive on adventure, discovery and invention, and to rediscover enduring values and our own identities within our own rich culture.



GUIDED BY REGGIO:

A REVIEW OF *REGGIO TUTTA – A GUIDE TO THE CITY BY THE CHILDREN*

by Eva Tarini

Reggio Tutta (All Reggio), as the title indicates, is a guidebook to the whole of Reggio Emilia. It depicts, in their unique language, the city of a group of children in love with their home. In it, a careful reader will find detailed portrayals of various physical aspects of Reggio: the *piazzas*, the theaters, the porticos, the statues, the churches, the markets, the streets, the municipal buildings and the bicycles. The reader who has been to Reggio will recognize many important landmarks; the reader unfamiliar with this city will be transported through words, drawings and photos to the hometown of these children. Fortunate are we who read this book because the children of Reggio Emilia are also keen observers of the less concrete aspects of a city. The precision with which they regard this place is equaled by the tenderness they use to share it with us. They tell us about the shadows they find as they play among the many columns in this city. They entice us with the smells that meet them as they walk throughout the market, as they pass cafes serving coffee and bakeries selling bread. They recreate for us the sounds encountered as they walk through a *piazza*, enter a theater, visit a church or stroll among the trees in the dark. They serve us the food they eat, detailing Reggio's culinary specialties in ways that can only whet our appetites.

This beautiful book is indeed a map of Reggio Emilia. But it is also a map of a particular practice of working with children. It guides us to be with children in deep and stimulating ways. It asks us to recognize children's potential for deep and stimulating thought. And it reminds us that children have the right to be engaged in deep and stimulating projects.

The children's portion of *Reggio* Tutta is introduced and followed by many essays written by adults. Reading the adults' words is a reminder of the way these educators involve themselves with young children. They are not quick and easy passages. Instead, they seriously consider the way the young authors approached their task: with gravity, love, subjectivity, subtlety and flexibility. These adults describe the thinking behind asking young children to collaborate on such a complex project. They revel in the gravity with which the children approach their task. They marvel at the children's ability to think beyond the concrete as they create a guide to their city and they compare the children's openness to their world with our (adult) more disillusioned outlook. As Baldini and Vecchi state, "While the adult's way of looking at the world is disenchanted, children are always eager to let themselves be enchanted." These adults are clearly enchanted by these children, by all children, by their work, and by their view of and contribution to our world.

REGGIO CHILDREN: ORGANIZATION, CONTACTS, EXHIBIT SCHEDULE

Reggio Children

In the spring of 1994, the Reggio Children organization was formed in Reggio Emilia, Italy, to support the municipality's world-renowned early childhood program. The goal of Reggio Children is to disseminate the wealth of knowledge in theory and practice that has resulted from more than 30 years of experience in the education of children from 3 months to 6 years of age. Through publication and distribution of books, articles, videos and slides that document the Reggio approach, educators can learn more about these educational principles and benefit their own classrooms.

Reggio Children also responds to the increasingly numerous requests for information and cooperative exchanges that arrive from all over the world. Reggio Children is a private, for-profit company governed by a board of directors and supported by shareholders – corporate, private (parents, teachers and other citizens of Reggio Emilia), and the Municipality of Reggio Emilia which holds the majority of shares. Until now this organization has not been open to individuals outside Italy.

Friends of Reggio Children

In memory of Loris Malaguzzi, Friends of Reggio Children, a non-profit, international organization, has been formed and membership is open to all. The goal of Friends of Reggio Children is to create an endowment that would establish a library for collecting documents about the Reggio approach and to provide funds for student research on the Reggio philosophy and principles.

Friends of Reggio Children is asking for your support. A one-time donation will entitle you to become a member of an international group who believes in the educational principles that the Reggio program exemplifies and in the right of children to obtain the best care and education possible. The association's membership fee is $35 U.S. and can be paid by banker's draft or by bank transfer (bank account # 26056/C at Cassa di Risparmio di Reggio Emilia, Piazza Battisti 1, 42100 Reggio Emilia. Members of Friends of Reggio Children will receive a subscription to *rechild*, the newsletter published by Reggio Children.

CONTACTS FOR REGGIO CHILDREN

Reggio Children USA Office for Publications
(Carol Brunson Day)
c/o Council for Professional Recognition
2460 16th. St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009
(800) 424-4310, (202) 265-9090,
fax (202) 265-9161
e-mail: www.cdacouncil.org

Angela Ferrario
Liaison in the U.S. for study tours
to Reggio Emilia
(202) 337-9191, e-mail:
aferrario@worldbank.org

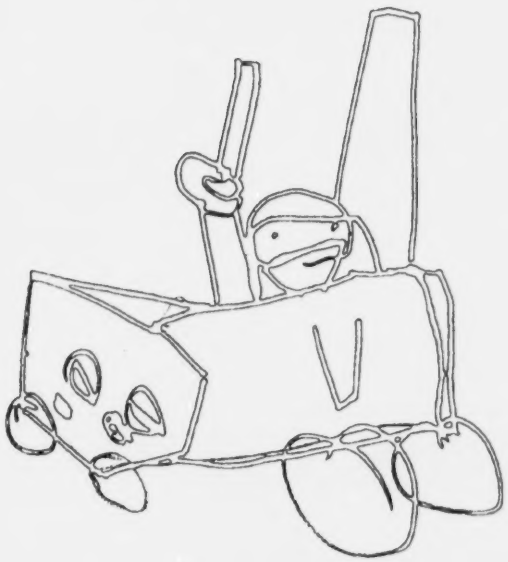
Amelia Gambetti
Reggio Children Coordinator and Liaison for consultancy in schools
c/o Reggio Children
Piazza della Vittoria 6, 42100 Reggio Emilia, Italy
39-0522-455416, fax 39-0522-455621
reggiochildren@reggiochildren.it

Lella Gandini
Liaison in the U.S. for dissemination of the Reggio Emilia Approach
American Academy in Rome
Via Angelo Masina, 5, 00153 Roma, Italy
39-06-58310928, fax 39-06-5810788
(at Academy)
lellagandini@compuserve.com
(**temporary address for five years, beginning on August 20, 1998**)

"THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES OF CHILDREN" EXHIBIT SCHEDULE

March - December 2001
St. Louis, Mo.
Contact:
Ashley Cadwell • The St. Michael School • 6345 Wydown Blvd. • St. Louis, MO 63105 • (314) 721-4670 • fax (314) 721-4670 • web site: www.stmichaelschool.org

What's in the future for "The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit?
In its 12 years on the road in North America, the exhibition has visited 34 cities in 22 states and provinces in the United States and Canada. Beginning in 2002, the exhibit will travel to Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio and then on to Florida.



NEW RESOURCE

Bambini: The Italian Approach to Infant/Toddler Care

Edited by Lella Gandini & Carolyn Pope Edwards
Foreword by Robert N. Emde

This volume is a timely contribution to the burgeoning dialogue on the Reggio Emilia approach, and features the work of prominent scholars, policy-makers, researchers, administrators and practicing teachers who have created and directed the infant-toddler care systems in four cities in Italy. Joined by American educators and researchers (including Ron Lally, Rebecca New and Jeanne Goldhaber), their work builds upon and extends inclusionary and family-centered philosophies. It combines missions of care and education, and produces innovations in space and environments. This collection is filled with dozens of examples of experiences with dynamic, open systems of organization that support emotional and cognitive development of infants and toddlers – and respect the delicate relationship between parents and their young. Also included are photos in both black and white and in color.

For more information or to order, please contact:
Teachers College Press
(800) 575-6566,
web site: www.teacherscollegepress.com

***NOTE ON AVAILABILITY OF *THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES OF CHILDREN: THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH – ADVANCED REFLECTIONS*
Ablex Publishing has been acquired by Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., who is now distributing *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach – Advanced Reflections*. To order, contact James Lingle, (203) 226-3571, ext. 3379, e-mail: jlingle@greenwood.com, web site: www.greenwood.com. Use source code F555, to purchase at the reduced price of $30.

REGGIO CONFERENCE CALENDAR

MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF REGGIO CHILDREN, s.r.l.

The office of Reggio Children, s.r.l., is pleased that there is so much interest in the United States about our infant centers, preprimary schools and educational philosophy. We note with pride the number of presentations concerning Reggio at national, state and local conferences across the U.S. focused specifically on the Reggio Emilia approach to education. We caution interested educators that some workshops purporting to present material concerning the Reggio Emilia approach have not accurately reflected our experiences and philosophy. In order to ensure accurate representation of ideas concerning Reggio, we urge organizers of workshops, seminars and conferences concerning the Reggio Emilia approach, whether non-profit or for-profit, to coordinate their plans with Reggio Children, s.r.l., via Piazza della Vittoria 6, 42100 Reggio Emilia, Italy, phone: 011-39-522-455416, fax: 011-39-522-455621, e-mail: ***reggiochildren@reggiochildren.it***

The listing of conferences, workshops and various forms of video and printed materials is presented by the editors of Innovations *to assist readers who are interested in descriptions and interpretations of the Reggio program. All those listed below are regarded by Reggio Children, s.r.l., as consistent with the spirit and philosophy of the Reggio schools.*

Innovative Teacher Project
Mills College • Oakland, Calif. • Susan Lyon, Director

Saturday Roundtable Discussion: January 13, 2001, Presidio Child Development, San Francisco
Contact:
Sandy Osborne
(415) 561-5822

From Documentation to Curriculum Design: Using Documentation to Reveal and Extend Children's Thinking
University of Colorado-Denver • Denver, Co. • January 13, 2001 • Keynote Speaker and Facilitator: George Forman
Contact:
Ellen Hall
(303) 443-8909, e-mail: ehall820@aol.com

Listen to Children's Stories: An Encounter with the Reggio Emilia Schools and Gianni Rodari
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque • Albuquerque, N.M. • January 19 & 20, 2001 • Speakers: Lella Gandini, Jack Zipes & Vera John-Steiner
Contact:
University of New Mexico web site
www.unm.edu/~reggio
or
Baji Rankin
(505) 277-1560
or
Michael LaFlamme
(505) 277-5571

Carnegie Mellon/Program for Collaborative Learning Saturday Seminar Series
Cyert Center for Early Education • Pittsburgh, Pa.

The Teacher as Researcher:
January 20, 2001: "Knowing Children: The Process of Observation, Interpretation and Documentation," Sonya Shoptaugh, Cyert Center and Shady Lane School educators
February 24, 2001: "Exploring Materials with Young Children: Drawing and Graphic Representation," Louise Cadwell and Cyert Center educators

The Importance of Relationships:
March 10, 2001: "Establishing a Sense of Community: The Role of the Educator in Infant, Toddler and Preschool Classrooms," Cyert Center educators and parents
April 28, 2001: "The Power of Parent Participation," Sonya Shoptaugh, Louise Cadwell, Cyert Center educators and parents

Tools for Documentation and Presentation:
February 10, 2001: Digital and 35mm Cameras and Scanning
March 24, 2001: Digital Images and the Fundamentals of Photoshop
April 7, 2001: Digital Images, Intermediate Photoshop and PowerPoint
Speakers: Lindie Droulia and Cyert Center educators
Contact:
Lindie Droulia
(412) 268-5470, e-mail: droulia@andrew.cmu.edu, web site: www.cmu.edu/cyert-center

Statewide Conferences
Moreland Hills Elementary School • Pepper Pike, Oh.
January 20, 2001: "Doors, Mirrors and Windows: Reggio-Inspired Reflections and Practices in a Public School Environment"
March 17, 2001: "Literacy & Project Work . . . Our Reflections"
Contact:
Sally Roman or Sallie Boyle
(216) 831-8600, ext. 502, e-mail: srroman@earthlink.net

A Day at First Presbyterian Nursery School
Santa Monica, Calif.
January 26, 2001
Contact:
Mary Hartzell Rota
(310) 451-9259,
e-mail: maryhart@earthlink.net

Bringing Reggio Emilia Home: A Winter Conference Sponsored by the Wisconsin Reggio Network
University School of Milwaukee • River Hills, Wis.
January 27, 2001
Speakers: Louise Cadwell & Chuck Schwall
Contact:
Marge Egenhoefer
(262) 786-6814, e-mail: geomar@powercom.net
or
Kate Tornehl
(414) 352-6000, ext. 1104,
e-mail: ktornehl@usm.k12.wi.us

Innovations in Early Education: A Seminar Series for Early Childhood Educators
Wayne State University • Detroit, Mi.
March 3, 2001:
Pam Oken-Wright, "Documentation: Both Mirror and Light"
May 12, 2001:
Dorothy Kelsie-Miller, "Creating a System of Support for Reflective Practice and Professional Development at Chicago Commons"
Contact:
Judith Allen Kaminsky
Merrill-Palmer Institute, Wayne State University
(313) 872-1790 ,
fax (313) 875-0947,
e-mail: j_a_kaminsky@wayne.edu

St. Louis – Reggio Collaborative Delegation Days
The College School, Clayton Schools' Family Center & The St. Michael School • St. Louis, Mo.
Delegation Days: April 4, 2001
International Conference:
April 5-7, 2001, "The Hundred Languages of Children"
Exhibition: Three Schools' Observations, Italian and St. Louis Educational Perspectives"
Intensive Workshop: Fall 2001
Contact:
Michael Holohan
St. Louis-Reggio Collaborative Coordinator
(314) 324-4940,
e-mail: mpholohan@earthlink.net

Columbus School for Girls Visitation Day
Bexley, Oh. • April 20, 2001
Contact:
Barbara Acton
(614) 252-0781, ext. 108,
e-mail: bacton@columbusschoolforgirls.org

2000-2001 Learning Tours and Presentations of Our Explorations of the Reggio Emilia Approach
Chicago Commons Child Development Program • Chicago, Ill. • May 3 & 4, 2001: Focus on Parent Partnerships
Contact:
Juana Reyes
Chicago Commons Child Development Program
3645 West Chicago Ave.,
Chicago, IL 60651-3934
(773) 638-5600,
fax (773) 826-4174, e-mail: reyesj@chicagocommons.org

Georgia Reggio Project Spring Institute: Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Reggio Approach
Atlanta, Ga. • Spring 2001
Contact:
Margie Cooper
Inspired Practices in Early Education, Inc.
(770) 552-0179, e-mail: margie.cooper@mindspring.com

Recasting the Reggio Emilia Approach to Inform Teaching in the United States: A Landscape of Possibilities
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University • Blacksburg, Va. • June 14-16, 2001
Contact:
e-mail: recastre@vt.edu, web site: www.conted.vt.edu/reggio.htm

2001 Summer Institute on Documentation
Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development, Tufts University • Boston, Ma. • Summer 2001 • Institute faculty: Rebecca New & Mary Jane Moran
Contact:
Eliot-Pearson web site: ase.tufts.edu/epcd/about.html

NEW *INNOVATIONS* EDITORIAL BOARD POLICY

Beginning with this issue, fall 2000, the editorial board of *Innovations in Early Education: the International Reggio Exchange* will serve on a two-year rotation. The intent is for the content of *Innovations* to reflect the diversity of perspectives and the evolution of the experience of early childhood educators in dialogue with the educators in Reggio Emilia. The editors of *Innovations* would like to express their appreciation for the support and contribution of all those who have served on the editorial board and played pivotal roles in the development of this publication into a substantive resource for educators around the world during the past eight years. Since the birth of the idea for *Innovations* during a conference in connection with "The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit in Detroit in the fall of 1991, a group of committed, innovative educators have contributed to the evolution of this resource as they have contributed to the deepening of interest in the Reggio Emilia philosophy in the United States and Canada. For their support, we wish to thank Eli Saltz, the former director of the Merrill-Palmer Institute; Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia municipal preschools and infant-toddler centers; Carla Rinaldi, pedagogical consultant for Reggio Children; and Amelia Gambetti, coordinator of Reggio Children and liaison for consultancy in schools. We would also like to express our appreciation to Patricia Weissman, editor of *Innovations* from 1992 to 1998, and to Rosalyn Saltz, associate editor from 1992 to 1997, for their work in establishing this valuable means for education and dialogue. These educators have enabled *Innovations* to trace some of the history of the study and dialogue around the Reggio Emilia philosophy in North America: Louise Cadwell, Carolyn Edwards, George Forman, Joanne Hendrick, Pamela Houk, Lilian Katz, Rebecca New, Baji Rankin, Sue Bredekamp, Carol Brunson Day, Brenda Fyfe and Rita Casey. Some of these educators will continue to serve on the editorial board during the next two years and will be joined by four new members: Jeanne Goldhaber, University of Vermont; Pam Oken-Wright, St. Catherine's School, Richmond, Virginia; Paola Riccò, Reggio Children; and Lynn White, Winnetka Public Schools, Winnetka, Illinois. We look forward to the continuing dialogue with these educators and those around the world.

Lella Gandini, associate editor, *Innovations* & Reggio Children liaison in the U.S. for dissemination of the Reggio Emilia approach
Judith Allen Kaminsky, editor, *Innovations*
The editor of *Innovations* would also like to acknowledge the essential contribution and invaluable perspective of Lella Gandini as an editorial board member from 1992 to 1997, and as associate editor from 1997 to the present.

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Subscriptions to ***Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Exchange*** are **$25** (**$30** U.S. funds for foreign) per year for four issues. Fill out the printed form and mail with a check payable to the Merrill-Palmer Institute to:

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RESOURCES RELATED TO THE REGGIO EMILIA EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

For a comprehensive listing of print and video resources related to the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy, contact these organizations:

Council for Professional Recognition/Reggio Children USA
2460 16th St. NW,
Washington, D.C. 20009
(800) 424-4310,
(202)265-9090,
fax (202) 265-9161
web site:
http://www.cdacouncil.org

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education
University of Illinois, Children's Research Center
51 Gerty Dr., Champaign, IL 61820-7469
(800) 583-4135,
(217) 333-1386,
fax (217) 333-3767
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The Merrill-Palmer Institute has added an extensive Reggio Emilia resource section to its web site. The web site now includes:

- Reggio Children information & contacts
- "The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit schedule
- Reggio Emilia study tour information
- Reggio Children print and video resources
- Reggio Emilia-related conference schedule regularly updated
- North American Reggio network contact information
- Reggio Emilia-related resources
- Information on organizations like Reggio Children USA and ERIC who distribute resources
- information about *Innovations* and the Reggio listserv

Each issue of *Innovations* will continue to include:

- Reggio Children information & contacts
- "The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit schedule
- Reggio Children study tour information
- Reggio Emilia-related conference schedule
- Information on organizations like Reggio Children USA, ERIC and Merrill-Palmer Institute who serve as resources to the early childhood community
- New resources from Reggio Children or related to the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy
- Information about the Reggio listserv

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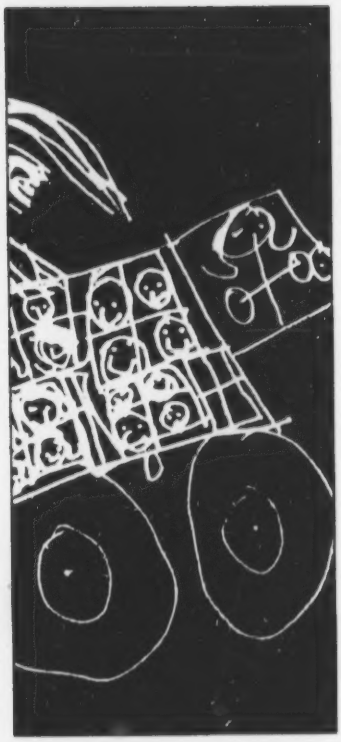

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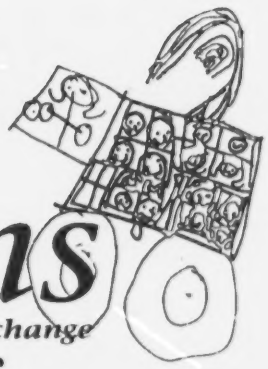

Innovations

in early education: ***the international reggio exchange***

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ADULT RELATIONS IN ITALIAN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

by Rebecca S. New, Bruce L. Mallory and Susanna Mantovani

Rebecca New is an Associate Professor of Child Development and Director of Teacher Education at the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development, Tufts University. She has been studying Italian early care and education since 1980. Bruce Mallory is the Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at the University of New Hampshire. Bruce has been studying Italian early care and education since 1994. Susanna Mantovani is a Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Milan-Bicocca in Milan, Italy. Susanna is the president of the National Group of Work and Study on Infant-Toddler Centers and Preschools in Italy.

In recent years, Becky, Bruce and Susanna have been engaged in research regarding the role of family and community in Italian early care and education. The multiple partners in this collaborative research endeavor include Carlina Rinaldi, Pedagogical Consultant and former Executive Director of Reggio Children, who served as supervisor of the research project for Reggio Emilia; Sergio Spaggiari, Director of the Municipal Educational Department; Paola Cagliari, pedagogista and coordinator of the research for Reggio Emilia; and Research Assistants Claudia Giudici for Reggio Emilia, Chiara Bove, Monica Guerra, Luisa Zecca and Barbara Zoccatelli for the other cities. Susanna Mantovani served as coordinator of the second research project for the cities of Milan, Trento, Parma and San Miniato. The two research projects are titled: "Sociocultural Construction of Home-School Relations: The Case of Reggio Emilia and Contemporary Italy." Rebecca New and Bruce Mallory, Co-Principal Investigators. Funding

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from the Spencer Foundation; and "Italian Concepts of Community, Social Responsibility, and Civic Participation: Childcare as Metaphor." Rebecca New and Susanna Mantovani, Co-Principal Investigators. Funding from the Spencer Foundation. See New, Mallory, and Mantovani (2000) for a more complete description of the research sample and methodology.

The following article is based on presentations given by Rebecca New (Italian perspectives on home-school relations. Innovations in Early Education, Merrill-Palmer Institute, Detroit, Michigan. May 6, 2000), Bruce Mallory (Concepts of quality in Italian infant care: Variations on a theme [w/ Monica Guerra]. National Association for the Education of Young Children, New Orleans, Louisiana; November 11, 1999) and Susanna Mantovani (Italian perspectives on home-school relations. National Association for the Education of Young Children, Atlanta, Georgia. November 10, 2000). An interview with Paola Cagliari, pedagogista *of the Reggio Emilia municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools, will appear in the next issue of* Innovations.

Indeed, it seemed that for most parents and teachers with whom we spoke, the primary purpose of early childhood programs is for children to develop relationships with other children as well as adults, and to learn how to use their developing relations in constructive ways because it's a part of living together.

–New, Mallory & Mantovani

Experience and research over the past two decades in the Italian culture has contributed substantially to our growing understanding of the critical importance of adult relationships in the care and education of young children. These experiences have not only helped us to gain a better understanding and appreciation of Italy's long tradition of early childhood services; they also serve as a compelling mirror for reflecting upon some U.S. cultural values and practices.

Within the U.S., the traditional belief has been that children's early care is best provided by members of the child's immediate family, at least in the first few years of life. In turn, out-of-home care has been viewed as compensatory and custodial, a necessary evil that is tied to parents' economic circumstances and working conditions rather than to the child's developmental needs. In spite of this generally negative image of out-of-home care for young children (and the growing evidence of poor to mediocre quality in many programs), parents are expected to assume a "hands-off" stance once the decision is made to place a child in an early childhood program. Both parents and professionals rely upon contemporary attachment literature suggesting that securely attached children easily adjust to out-of-home care. Also perpetuating the boundaries between home and educational care settings is the image of teachers and caregivers as professionals who know what is best for other people's children. Thus, with the exception of programs like Head Start, parent involvement is often limited to formal biannual conferences, fund raising events and brief, episodic interactions during drop-off and pick-up times (New, 1999).

Italian interpretations of children and the early childhood services developed for them are in striking contrast to those in the U.S., where the young child is first and foremost a family responsibility. In the Italian culture, children are seen not only as members of their families, but

also as active participants in and citizens of the larger community. This image of the Italian child as an active member of the community is directly translated into contemporary Italian attitudes regarding early care and education. As one mother in Reggio Emilia noted, even the very young child, one as young as four months, has both the right and the need to get to know and be known by other members of the community beyond the nuclear family. The *asilo nido* [infant-toddler center] and *scuola dell'infanzia* [preschool] are considered ideal places for such relationships to begin to develop.

One of the most obvious manifestations of this cultural belief is found in the national laws that have supported the provision of early educational programs for young children, beginning in the late 1960's. Today, through the combination of state, municipal and private services, Italian preschoolers have almost universal access to programs regarded as essential to their social and intellectual development. As a result of recent educational reforms at the state and regional levels, these services have been expanded to include program support for an increasing number of infants and toddlers. This attitude about children's right to non-familial relationships, now embodied in national policies, has major implications for the roles of parents and professionals; the Italian interpretation of these adult roles is in dramatic contrast to the dichotomized version that characterizes home-school relationships in most U.S. early childhood programs.

Our understanding of these cultural differences in adult relationships has been expanded as a result of our recent collaborative project on home-school relations in early childhood. This study has taken place in five Italian cities with reputations for high quality municipal early childhood programs: Milan, Trento, Reggio Emilia, Parma, and San Miniato. The research sample included families and teachers in 46 public and private *asili nido* and *scuole dell'infanzia* in the five cities. We initially conceptualized this study as a way to better situate Reggio Emilia's early childhood program within the larger landscape of contemporary Italy. As a result of initial findings, however, the project soon expanded to focus on the evolving principle of *partecipazione*, a concept embraced by Loris Malaguzzi [founder of the Reggio Emilia municipal preschool program] and now influential in many Italian early care and education programs. As we continue to work with other members of the research team in the analysis and interpretation of the data, three principles have surfaced as clear challenges to contemporary U.S. trends and ideals in early childhood policy and practice: the ability to collaborate as an essential goal of human development, social policy as a means of promoting social relationships and quality as a function of adult engagement.

Collaborative relations as a developmental aim and educational goal.

The cultural value of collaborative relations is expressed in numerous aspects of contemporary life in Italy. Building upon centuries of co-habitation among extended family households as well as sharecropping and guild-based economic traditions, Italians have a positive view of the utility of interdependent and collaborative relations that contrasts dramatically with the American values of independence and autonomous creativity. These Italian views have numerous practical implications in educational

settings. For example, Italian early childhood and elementary classrooms typically have at least two teachers for every group of children. The country's economic growth in the early 1970's helped to make the addition of a second teacher possible. These classrooms of adults and children are not bound by age-graded years. Rather, class groups stay together for the duration of their shared time in an educational setting, whether the three years of a *scuola dell'infanzia* [traditionally referred to as *scuola materna*] or the five years of an elementary school.

Given these cultural values and traditions, it should not have been a surprise that a majority of the parents and teachers we interviewed (whether of infants, toddlers or preschoolers) declared that learning how to be together–*stare insieme*–was one of the first and major goals of early childhood. When asked about the role of childcare in children's development, they again pointed to the need for a space and occasion when children could be helped by competent teachers to become members of groups. Being a member of a group was prerequisite for other culturally valued skills, most importantly learning how to collaborate, communicate and resolve conflicts. Indeed, it seemed that for most parents and teachers with whom we spoke, the primary purpose of early childhood programs is for children to develop relationships with other children as well as adults, and to learn how to use their developing relations in constructive ways because it's a part of living together. Few adults, parents or teachers, talked about wanting to prepare children for formal schooling or to help children become more independent of adults. When the concept of autonomy was mentioned, it was most often in terms of children's abilities to develop their own personal relationships and to learn how to work and play together.

These discussions about goals for children also conveyed distinct interpretations of parent and teacher roles. Several Italian parents emphasized that childcare is not a matter of delegating the care of their children to other people. Few parents justified the child's participation in out-of-home care as related to their adult needs as working parents. While most Italian parents work at least

part-time, those in our study explained their choice of non-familial care as a good in itself, not solely as a solution to their own employment obligations. Parents and teachers also held the same expectations (of collaborating with others) as they expressed for their children. When asked to choose the ideal home-school relationship, an overwhelming majority of respondents selected the type of home-school relationship characterized by ongoing exchanges and collaboration, rejecting the choice of the episodic contacts that more often characterize such relations in the U.S.

In subsequent conversations with teachers, we learned how diligently they work to show parents that they are needed. Some of this reaching out to parents takes place in the early days of the child's transition from the home to early childhood setting. During this period of *l'inserimento*, teachers focus initially on such things as the simple sharing of bedtime routines, recipes and infant spoons. In one *nido* in Reggio Emilia, mothers were asked to approve of the food prepared by the cook and to show the teacher how to feed her baby, or to facilitate her child's initial interactions with another classmate, a potential friend. Each fall in Parma and its neighbor city Modena, parents are invited to stay with the newly-enrolled child for a period of several weeks or longer, insuring that both parents and teachers have time to develop shared understandings of the child as well as a critical sense of mutuality and trust (Bove, 1999).

During the course of this study, we have had numerous opportunities to recognize the power of these "windows of opportunity" through which parents might enter into egalitarian relationships with their child's teachers and caregivers. These relationships continued to develop as the adults established additional formal and informal means of coming together to share ideas, concerns and hopes for their children. As might be anticipated from the perspective of social referencing theory, infants and young children also receive a powerful message about the importance of these partnerships among the adults in their lives, thereby encouraging them to move with greater confidence toward developing new relationships. The value assigned to adult and child relations builds upon and contributes to larger cultural values reflected in national policies.

The social agenda of social policies in Italian early childhood.

The widespread belief in shared responsibility for the care of young children is reflected not only in the social policies establishing government support (at the state, regional and local levels) for early childhood programs, but also the rights of parents to be actively engaged in the management of those services. Thus, the principles of collaboration discussed in our interviews with parents and teachers are also found in a series of social policy initiatives that provide the foundations for the types of parent-teacher relations that we just described. One such policy, that of *gestione sociale* [social management], was the result of a fortuitous set of circumstances in which Loris Malaguzzi capitalized on initiatives that began in the post-war labor movement. Beginning with the 1947 Italian Constitution, the principle of democratic participation in labor relations played a central role in both industrial and public policies. As the democratic socialist and communist parties became more influential by the 1960's, this principle became widely accepted as a general condition of civic life. In the early and mid-1960's, when municipal programs were established in Reggio Emilia and other parts of

Emilia Romagna, *gestione sociale* was incorporated as an essential aspect of program design. By 1971, when the national government enacted law 1044 establishing the *asilo nido* as a state responsibility, it also stipulated that each *nido* would be managed with the participation of families and representatives of social organizations in the territory. Although legislated specifically for infant-toddler centers, the concept of *gestione sociale* has continued to play a major role in management practices in municipal, state, and private *scuole dell'infanzia* as well.

Our research has shown how such policy-related features of an educational program can be sustained and reinterpreted through the daily practices that characterize early childhood programs. In Reggio Emilia, for example, the environments (buildings and classrooms) remind parents of their active role, whether through the half-empty panels at the beginning of the year that await new members' images, the continued display of previous parent groups and their projects, or the abundant documentation of experiences recorded and shared with parents on a daily basis. Such practical features both represent and reconstruct the culture of the school as a "system of relations." When parents read highlights about their child's day from the notes hanging by the classroom door before lunch time, they are motivated and prepared to have a richer conversation with the child, other parents and the teachers. Similar evidence of the practical consequences of this valuing of social relationships was found in the four other cities in our sample. In San Miniato, where the documentation and communication tools were equally elaborate, parents and teachers met and debated the merits of mixed age groupings for the 0-3 age group. In every setting, teachers worked to provide sufficient information about curriculum activities so that parents would feel both informed and invited to have further conversations. Adult-sized furniture was found in a majority of early childhood settings, conveying the clear message to parents to slow down and stay a while when they arrive to bring or pick up their child. The long-term engagements that result from these practices is evidenced through more than the fact that parent projects (such as the colored water tubes in the bathroom of one class in Reggio Emilia) become part of the permanent environment of the school. The resulting system of relations also insures that parents remain active participants in the ongoing assessment and evaluation of the programs themselves.

The social construction of quality through adult relations.

One of the most significant findings of this study is the degree of satisfaction expressed by parents in the quality of the early childhood programs, particularly those whose children attend municipal programs with strong parent-teacher relationships. Much of this sense of quality, of course, was expressed through parents' views about their children's well-being, the sense that children's needs were being met. This satisfaction with children's care, however, was also based on parental satisfaction with their own relations with those who cared for their young children. Repeatedly, we heard parents discuss the importance they attributed to teachers' willingness to share information with them about their children's school activities and accomplishments, the sense of belonging they felt as they participated in parent council meetings or assisted in classroom projects and field trips, and the obvious importance assigned to their own views and values in their child's learning and development. Teachers, in turn, also acknowledged their conscious desire for

egalitarianism, describing various strategies for creating a relationship with a parent based on humility, in order to establish trust or *rapportarsi*. One *pedagogista* [curriculum coordinator] noted the challenges for teachers in this process, explaining that "one way a tea[illegible] shows competence is to not display all of her [illegible]petencies in front of the parents."

By beginning with the message that parents are welcomed and expected to be interested in their children's early care and school experiences, these Italian adults eventually develop working relationships that enable them to address more complex issues. Structural and organizational features, such as staying together for three years, also help to insure that enduring relationships can be established. Within such a context of mutuality, it seems natural for parents and teachers in Milan to meet and discuss what they know about home environments in order to enhance children's experiences, moving them to consider what could be done in school but not at home because of more space or available materials. Similarly, teachers in San Miniato explained their need for parents' advice about strategies for helping each child to feel more comfortable falling asleep at the center. In each of these examples, the purpose of this shared work is clear: to develop strategies for understanding and promoting children's learning and development in a deliberate and collaborative manner. When the goals and responses are co-constructed by teachers and parents, the social construction of developmental appropriateness becomes possible. This sense of personal investment and collaborative effort, balanced by ongoing occasions in which adults are asked to exchange and debate their various views and opinions, helps not only to define high quality early childhood services. The collaborative relationships that are behind these efforts become themselves a critical quality indicator.

Conclusion.

As a result of this research, we have learned a great deal about the contemporary Italian culture; by contrast, this study also highlights features of the U.S. culture as well. In each of the five cities where we have worked, we have been reminded over and over again of children's membership in their communities, not as tokens or dependents but as legitimate citizens in their own right. We have also seen the remarkable extent to which children serve as catalysts for adult conversations, many of which are then focused on adult responsibilities relative to children's needs, rights and potentials. For the American members of this research collaborative (New and Mallory), some of the contrasts raise troubling questions: What rights do children in the U.S. have to high quality and enduring relationships outside of the home?

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How do traditional early care and educational practices work against the development of such relationships? It is not uncommon in the U.S. for parents and teachers to express concerns about children's close friendships; indeed, schools routinely move children from year to year to different classes of peers and teachers, sometimes working explicitly to break up friendships that have become "too close." Many parents and teachers express concerns about children and teachers staying in the same group for periods longer than one year.

> *As might be anticipated from the perspective of social referencing theory, infants and young children also receive a powerful message about the importance of these partnerships among the adults in their lives, thereby encouraging them to move with greater confidence toward developing new relationships.*
>
> – New, Mallory & Mantovani

We also have new questions about the role of adult relationships in the U.S. What kind of relationships do American teachers really want with parents? As a field, we often talk about the need for greater parental involvement. And yet, that need often simply means a wish for someone to bring cupcakes to the class party. The Italian teachers that we interviewed would be happy but not satisfied with such practical help, the sort that many parents in the U.S. willingly offer. We are less confident, however, about how many U.S. teachers would be willing to foster closer partnerships with parents, the sort in which they worked together to make critical decisions about what and how their children should learn. The notion of parents as teachers of teachers is especially unsettling to those who see professional competence as something that is obtained from academic experiences with objective sources of knowledge and understanding. It is not just teachers who are hesitant about a closer relationship with parents, some of whom express dismay at being asked to participate more often in their child's early care and educational experiences: "I'm paying for this service; I shouldn't have to provide it."

The value of *partecipazione* we have documented in Italy requires and contributes to respectful, sustained, and collaborative adult relationships. The nature of these relationships is both cultural (embedded in implicit belief systems) and political (reflected in formal policies and individual behaviors). The tradition in the U.S. is of a different sort, one in which each adult is expected to do his or her job. Interpersonal relationships are often short-term, and competition and autonomy serve as the culturally valued incentives. These diverse interpretations of optimal adult development contribute to the cultural differences that we find in the two nations' responses to the period of early childhood. As we continue in our work, this Italian study challenges us to be more mindful of the potentials of adult relationships to influence the quality of life for young children, their families and the larger community.

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CREATING A COMMUNITY FOR INFANTS: *HEARING ALL THE VOICES*

by Dee Smith

Dee Smith is a Head Teacher in the Infant/Toddler program at the Campus Children's Center and a Lecturer in the Early Childhood Program at the University of Vermont. The Campus Children's Center is a year-round employee-based early childhood program for children from 6 weeks to 5 years of age. The center is dedicated to serving the children who are enrolled in the center and their families, and provides an early childhood training facility for the University of Vermont and the surrounding community. Dee has participated in four delegations to the schools in Reggio Emilia since 1991 and will be a member of the study tour group in May 2001.

For the past two decades, our society has been struggling with the concept of group care for very young children. As early as 1986, studies based on attachment theory surfaced which raised concerns about infants and toddlers in full-time group care (Belsky, 1986, 1988; Belsky and Rovine, 1988). In addition to this early research, our country has a history of cultural biases toward mothers as nearly exclusive caregivers of children. As a nation, we have fiercely protected the "rights" as well as the "responsibilities" of families to raise their children without interference from outside agencies. We have a strong history of valuing the individual more than the collective.

Throughout these past two decades, family roles have been changing. Increasingly, women are working part-time or full-time outside of the home. Federal government and most state government policy makers are only beginning to have meaningful dialogues about the changing dynamics of family life, and few have taken positive steps toward supporting the population most affected by our present social reality . . . the children.

Recent research has helped to dispel some of our most pressing concerns about early group care outside of the home. In 1998, results were released from the NICHD Early Child Care Network which suggest that the effects of positive family factors do not appear to be altered by full-time, center-based care, and that quality full-time care for young children may, in fact, function as a buffer for families with limited resources. However, our political systems continue to offer few financial and structural supports to families who need and/or desire quality care for their very young children.

The story I'd like to share explores the potential for communities to broaden or alter their personal and historical assumptions about caring for infants and young toddlers outside of the home. This story addresses the possibility that there is more than one way for families to care for their youngest children. It is the story of teachers consciously building a community for the mutual benefit of the children in their care. It is a beautiful story of caring parents, teachers and students who are supported by a program which has dedicated its eleven short years to advocating for the children in its full-time, year-round early care and education program. Our program is fortunate in that we are supported by an early childhood program staff and faculty, and a university which provides this service for the benefit of its employees' families. Sadly, it is not a story which is typical of the state of infant care in this country. Hopefully, it will serve as an inspiration to early childhood educators regardless of the structure of their center.

This past fall, our infant teachers, Michelle and Leah, welcomed six new children (ranging from six weeks to twelve months of age) and their families into the infant classroom. A week later, six second-year early childhood students joined them in staffing the classroom. These students were eager to learn about the babies and their development, apprehensive about pleasing both the infants and their parents, and full of questions about what it is like to be a teacher of infants. This combination of new faces created the core of a multitude of new relationships which were to be the foundation of the classroom community for the year.

The teachers began the semester with an interest in getting to know the babies and having them adjust to their new environment. This group of infants was especially unique. All of the families had children in our center previously, and most still had a child enrolled in the preschool. Our infant teacher, Michelle, had been the teacher of several of the infants' siblings who were now in the preschool. Our new infant teacher, Leah, had been a student teacher and some of the parents already knew her from her work with their older children. In addition, because this is an employee-based program, at least one parent of each family had his or her office on or near campus. We wondered how all these connections and relationships would influence the infant room, the other classrooms of the center and the campus in general. We also wondered if these past relationships between teachers and parents would be helpful to our new students or make their entry more challenging.

. . . maintain family relationships during the day

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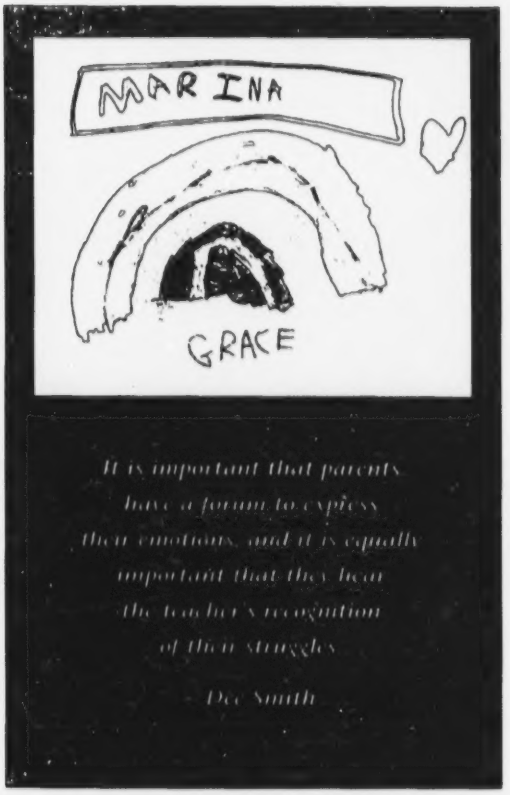
In an effort to better understand and honor the transition for everyone, the teachers wrote letters to the families, the students, and the teachers of the infants' siblings, asking for their perspectives on becoming part of the infant community. For example, they asked the parents:

- What are your early impressions and feelings about entering the infant room?
- How are you feeling about your child being at the center? What pleases and excites you the most about having your child here? What apprehensions and challenges do you have?
- Tell us about the connections you are forming with the students, the other families and the staff of the infant room.
- Are we helping you stay connected with your child during the day? How can we be more supportive of this transition?
- How does it feel to have your infant at the school where his/her sibling attends (or attended)? How do you think your older children feel about having "their baby" here?
- Are there any special routines that are important to you?

The teachers added their own thoughts to the responses of parents, students, center teachers and siblings. The teachers made these voices public through a large document placed outside of the classroom. This document spoke of the deep emotions connected with teaching infants, with being a parent who leaves his or her child in the care of others, with becoming a teacher, with being a sibling. It also sent a very powerful message to all the protagonists in the room that they were valued members of the infant room community, and their voices were important. I have


MARINA
GRACE
It is important that parents have a forum to express their emotions, and it is equally important that they hear the teacher's recognition of their struggles
Dee Smith

selected quotes from these documents as a means for reflecting on how the infant room developed into a community.

"The beginning of our journey together has been a special and powerfully moving time for me. Having relationships with the families that have been developing for years and knowing Leah made it feel as if I was coming home to the infant room. On our home visits, we were greeted with open arms, hand-picked flowers, treats and thoughtful questions. What an amazing way to start the year together. While we set up our space to welcome all of the new members of our community, I was filled with joy for all of the possibilities." (Michelle, mentor teacher)

This statement clearly reflects Michelle's joy as a teacher of very young children, and her

recognition of the importance of the families. She honors a past student as her new co-teacher, welcomes the families, and recognizes that the environment is important to the future "possibilities" of the community. Michelle is a teacher who firmly believes in providing the highest quality care for small groups of young children, and recognizes that the relationships that develop are central to those possibilities. Underlying this statement, however, is the reality that meaningful relationships in a program for children flourish because there are strong systems of organization. Communities are built on relationships. It is imperative that basic organizational systems support, rather than hinder, relationships as we seek to create environments for infants.

We can readily testify to the fact that changing basic organizational patterns is not easy. Often a decision to change one aspect of your center takes multiple steps and may affect other parts of your organization. For example, during our early years as a center, our infants and toddlers transitioned from room to room, but our staff remained in their respective classrooms. When teachers and parents met, and decided that teachers and children would move together for the first three years, we didn't have the classroom structure to make the transitions smoothly. We went before the board of trustees to create another classroom, thus allowing groups to remain together easily for the first three years before moving into the preschool.

The organization of our students' experiences also required attention. During our first five years of operation, we placed our early childhood students in two different classrooms in the center. One semester they would focus on infants and toddlers, working only six hours/week in the classroom. Later they would student teach full-time in the preschool for a semester. After several years of studying the Reggio approach, we began to recognize the significant role of relationships in developing quality programs for young children. How could we best demonstrate this understanding to our students when clearly our course structure did not support long-term relationships? In fact, we realized that the way we chose to structure our curriculum did not support either our young children, who needed more continuity of care, or our students, who felt they were just getting to know the children and families after one semester. Overcoming administrative, scheduling and academic obstacles, we changed our course design so that our early childhood students would experience a continuous in-depth relationship with a group of children. As a result, they now spend the fall semester of their second year in one of our four classrooms for ten hours/week, while attending seminars related to development and their teaching. In the spring, they become student teachers in the same classroom, spending approximately 24 hours/week in the room, and six hours/week in discussion and documentation activities with a mentor teacher or the head teacher, who is their course instructor. This new structure was based on the belief that if our students focused intently on one group of children, learning how to create community, observe and document, they would be able to transfer this knowledge to their work with other age groups. The decision to make this organizational change was a difficult one, but one we do not regret, even though it has created a few new challenges! We continue to receive very positive feedback from our students, families and teachers, about the meaningfulness of this year-long experience.

There is no "expert" — everyone is seeking to understand and learn from the babies who, in turn, are seeking to understand their world.

This attitude is extremely important to our parent/teacher relationships as well as our own teacher/student relationships. It opens up dialogue, promotes inquiry and creates trust.

–Dee Smith

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"After meeting the babies, I was inspired and exhilarated. I couldn't wait to get back to school to create the perfect environment. I wanted them to feel as comfortable and invited in the infant room as I had felt in their homes." (Leah, mentor teacher)
Both Michelle and Leah recall their visits to each infant's home, a practice we have followed since first opening more than ten years ago. These visits are arranged prior to the infants attending the center, and provide the teachers an opportunity to learn about the children's interactions with parents and siblings in the physical space the families know best. It is an occasion to listen to and observe family interactions closely, and learn how to best support individual babies. It is also a time for parents to get to know teachers more intimately. Rich conversations take place during these visits supported by a questionnaire which each family completes. The parents are asked questions such as:

- What is your child especially interested in?
- What seems to soothe your child? Does your child have any comfort items, such as a pacifier, a special blanket or toy?
- What seems particularly stressful or upsetting to your child?
- How does your child like to go to sleep?

Parents and infants transition into the center at their own rate. We encourage parents to spend as much time as possible at the center during the first weeks, but this varies from family to family. We also encourage shortened days in the beginning. We are extremely flexible, as each parent's responsibilities at his or her workplace are different. On occasion, we have had grandparents and even nannies transition the baby into our program. While supporting the infants, we must also support their families.

"While experiencing so much satisfaction in being with the infants and providing such rich experiences, I am struck with an internal struggle. My heart breaks for all the parents who are in pain while they are away from their children. It makes me want to be as sensitive as humanly possible to the parent-child relationship. I want the parent to know I consider it an honor and the ultimate responsibility to care for, nurture and teach their children."
This sensitive statement by Michelle about the complex emotions of parents whose children are in her care addresses a very delicate relationship between teachers and parents.

Consider the following statement from a parent's writing:
"The hard part, for me, is missing Lucien. Some days I can hardly tear myself away from him in the morning, and that longing to be with him lasts all day. I know that he is safe, cared for and happy, but I want to be with him." (Hannah, infant parent)

These are powerful feelings Hannah expresses to the teachers and the students, and ones that might not be shared so openly in a verbal exchange on a routine day. It is important that parents have a forum to express their emotions, and it is equally important that they hear the teacher's recognition of their struggles.

"....The center itself --the physical space is familiar. The attention to beauty and function and sensitivity to infant development that go into the room design and daily set-ups make the space feel welcoming, safe, and exciting." (Hannah).
Space is important, something that deserves to be thought about ahead of time. It is not something that develops randomly, but is responsive to observations of the children's explorations. *Everything* is thought about in the environment,

even the most mundane: How do the plants greet the parents and children? Do they look tired and uncared for? Or are they maintained in a manner that helps them to flourish? Each little space is developed in a way that says, "I want you to engage with me . . . I am inviting you" . . . so materials are not laid out randomly. They invite both infants and parents to come and explore them together. For example, in our infant room there is a single door threshold to the larger classroom to which the teachers give particular attention. The teachers seek to make it particularly inviting, recognizing that it is often the first place the babies encounter when they enter the classroom. It is a place to welcome the infants, to stir their sense of curiosity, and to ease both the baby's and the parent's transition into the life of the school.

"Bringing Katey to my office and checking with me before each meal helps me to stay connected. I really feel empty when I have a work day that takes me completely away from her." (Mary, infant parent)

"What pleases me the most is the attention and respect to the parent/child relationship. I appreciate all your efforts to accommodate our needs and special requests . . . I have appreciated all your efforts to help me with Aidan's feeding schedule. I especially have enjoyed our meetings in the 'Secret Garden.' Thanks for incorporating your walks into his feeding schedule. It's been working out perfectly for me." (Sandy, infant parent)

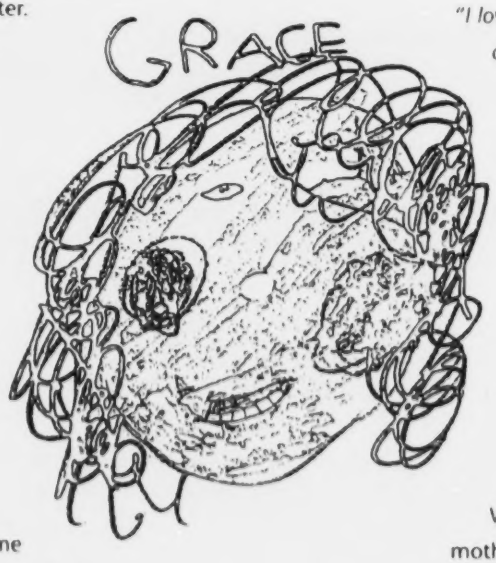
Parents are always welcome to visit their children at the center throughout the day. Creating time and space for teachers, families and children to form relationships is crucial to developing a community. Because many of our parents work on campus, they routinely come at different times of the day. For example, the mothers who breast feed their infants visit the infant room several times a day and have the opportunity to talk with teachers and students regularly. However, visiting is not always an option for parents. Our infant teachers help parents stay connected to their children throughout the day by bringing infants to their mother's office for breast feeding, or when possible to either parent's office or work place for a visit. Of course, this does not happen everyday. Sometimes there is not enough staff, the schedule is too hectic, or the weather is not cooperative. But parents know that teachers will make the effort to visit whenever possible. This thoughtfulness on the teachers' part makes a strong statement to parents – that the teachers highly value the parent/child relationship; that they recognize how difficult it is for parents to visit their children throughout the day when it means leaving their office; that they honor the importance of breast feeding; and that they respect the need for young children to stay connected to their family during a long day away from parents. Michelle and Leah also talk frequently on the phone with parents, letting them know how their child's day is going, or asking a question when they are unclear about a decision affecting their child.

"It's extremely important to us that both girls are together. They take care of each other in ways that can't really be seen. Allie (2 1/2 year old) feels more comfortable with me leaving for work knowing that Katey is there." (Mary, infant parent)

"Marley has an interest in feeding Kuochuan. Maybe she could be called to help with that, so they can connect during the day." (Li Ling, infant parent)

Our parents are incredibly grateful to have their children together at the center. Early on, we adopted a policy that siblings would have priority

for enrollment. This policy supports families both practically and emotionally. As a result of this practice, there is also a considerable amount of exchange between the infant room and other classrooms in the center. One or two preschool children can often be found visiting the infant room, allowing siblings to be together and other preschoolers to form relationships with babies. Because many of our families have a second child around the time their toddler is ready to enter the preschool, it also means that the preschool children who come to visit their siblings are able to stay connected to their infant/toddler teacher who has rotated back to the infant room.



This openness to having older children visiting the infant room was not always present in our center. However, our increasing number of sibling relationships and our teacher rotation schedules forced us to rethink our attitudes about infants and preschoolers visiting each other's classrooms. At first, many questions were raised by the infant teachers regarding safety, numbers of preschoolers and the flow of the day. We studied our questions, observed the children and made infant/preschool relationships an inquiry for an entire year. We found meaningful relationships developed not only among the babies and preschoolers, but also between the teachers in our infant room and our preschool! It is a system that has served us well as we study what babies are interested in and the incredible competencies they show us when, for instance, being presented with materials which might ordinarily be reserved for older children.

"I love having Grace here. The center, and the teaching and learning that takes place there daily for everyone (kids, students, teachers and parents alike) are truly a retention tool for UVM . . . the panel you put together (about Grace and Derek) is so sweet!" (Gisele, infant parent).

We feel honored that this mother considers all of the protagonists in the classroom to be learners. It is an idea we have tried to promote with both our parents and our students. This mother feels a partnership with the teachers and students. There is no "expert" – everyone is seeking to understand and learn from the babies who, in turn, are seeking to understand their world. This attitude is extremely important to our parent/teacher relationships as well as our own teacher/student relationships. It opens up dialogue, promotes inquiry and creates trust.

Our work with students in documenting the life of the classroom is of particular interest to our parents. We share our documents in the classroom, in children's journals and in our hallways. It is a powerful tool for many reasons, but for our parents it provides a lens into the teachers' and students' thinking, a context for the many hours they spend away from their child, and a forum for

discussion with the staff and with other parents. It clearly conveys the value we place on the children's interests and their thinking, and on the importance of daily routines with young children. Many parents are surprised by the focus of our documents and the competencies of their children. Several years ago, a father of an infant expressed this to us in a meeting when we were discussing our process of documenting. Though his exact words were unfortunately not recorded, his thoughts remain vivid in my mind. He talked about how he could *never* look at his child's play in the same way again. He found that his child was not just a "cute" little baby who plays with toys on the floor. He now viewed his infant as an active, inquisitive member of our society. This infant was his third child and his other children were adolescents. He was convinced that these documents had helped him to view his infant in an entirely new way.

"My special place is in the infant room because my sister is there." (Eric, preschooler)

Without a doubt, it is extremely important to the children to maintain their family relationships during the day. We've seen siblings reaching out to each other in many ways when their parents are at work. We have noticed that the preschoolers often take comfort in visiting the infant room where the general atmosphere is often more serene. They appear to find it soothing to be in the environment and with their younger sibling. Alternatively, an upset infant will often calm when teachers take them to the preschool to visit their older brother or sister.

"The reason that I now feel so comfortable and confident when I am working in the room is that I feel that I am a part of an extensive network of support. . . I was extremely impressed with the main focus of the infant room: listening to and observing the children, and trying to learn about the children through these observations. It is a refreshing change to work in a place where the children are considered to be active participants in their own education, instead of people who just need to be taught something. I have noticed that this approach to teaching has had a major impact on how I interact with children. . . I feel that my smooth and welcoming transition into the infant room has allowed me to be comfortable enough to ask questions, make mistakes and learn more than I ever have about teaching."
(Cate, student teacher in infant room).

This student's writing is a testament to our value of having strong mentor teachers in each of our classrooms, whose styles may vary but whose philosophical ideas are shared by the entire staff. The mentor teachers who model practice and inquiry are the most important assets we have as a program. As Cate describes, however, the multiple layers of support for one another are also important. Our four classrooms have two head teachers and two faculty members who are connected to the center. These support staff and faculty are sometimes listeners, occasionally provokers, organizers and course instructors to students, and sometimes office personnel. We are a small, tightly-knit organization that shares space, ideas, triumphs and conflicts on a daily basis. We often talk about living in a "fish-bowl"; the days are intense, often exhausting, but mostly rich and rewarding! We all share a passion to learn and that enthusiasm is evident in our practice.

Recently I asked the infant teachers and students to reflect on how their classroom creates community. Not surprisingly, their discussion centered around communication. As much as

they love being with the children, they reflected on how much they valued the sustained time outside of the classroom to reflect on children's inquiries. They felt it was essential to review anecdotal records and videotape from the week, to discuss the content, their reflections and analysis together to inform their practice and provoke new thinking.

The students also felt the public documents helped to create dialogue with the parents who supported or challenged their thinking with anecdotes from home. These exchanges support teachers and students as they think about the evolving classroom environment and new experiences which might be meaningful to the children. The students' more formal presentations to the parents about their inquiries during the semester support them as they continue to learn about the skills needed for communicating with parents.

The students and teachers also emphasized the importance of accepting diverse views when working with families. Each family has its own hierarchy of values, its own ways of interacting with infants and its own unique schedules. The students and teachers discussed parents with conflicting views they had encountered, for example, regarding the sleeping patterns of a baby. Most importantly, they recognized the diversity of families and the necessity of keeping communication open. They discussed times when both the parents and the staff had modified their points of view to accommodate the families and the operation of the classroom. They were learning that no one perspective is more valid than another. As they talked, I was struck by the professional nature with which the mentor teachers discussed the parents. The respect shown by the teachers for each of the families is a strong and necessary model for students as they seek to form relationships and create meaningful dialogue with the parents of the children.

This story would not be complete, however, without the voices of the infants. Though they do not speak to us in words, their facial expressions, gestures and body language have clearly made statements to us about their role in our community. The infants have taught us when our systems worked and when they didn't. The babies let us know when there were too many transitions in the room. They helped us to redesign the early childhood student placements to accommodate their needs. They gave new meaning to enriching the environment as we struggled with novel and varied ways of presenting materials in the classroom. They helped us create a respectful and responsive community.

Most importantly, the babies showed us how competent they were. We marveled at their abilities to support each other both cognitively and socially. We were stunned by their sustained inquiry over long periods of time; it was something we hadn't learned from textbooks. With their developing communication skills, they showed us they could collaborate with each other very early in life. We began documenting their inquiries and the more we documented, the more we understood this rich and ever changing period of life. The babies helped us to focus on their strengths and their potentials.

"We learn how to be better people, how to raise good people and develop strong communities . . . I am best taught and succeed when my 'teachers' become my colleagues and fellow researchers who do not always have the 'right' answers, but realize that they, along with myself, are constantly

searching for answers – and whether they are 'right' or 'wrong' does not matter the most. It is how you go about finding the answers while being a part of your community that matters most." (Annie, early childhood student).

We have always struggled with the balance of providing high quality programs for both our infants and our undergraduates. For example, while we want the most knowledgeable, warm and responsive teachers interacting with our infants, we also need to give new students time to form relationships, gain trust and obtain experience. And there is *always* the question of continuity of care and the question of how many are too many adults. Recognizing this dilemma helps us make informed choices, given our dual mission of service to university employees and their children, and to students. Annie's quote reminds us why we persist in exploring this delicate balance. Our students are forming new models of caring for and teaching young children in this country; ones that challenge some of our past ideas, and broaden the possibilities for communities supporting children and families.

In closing, I'd like to share a quote from Gisele, one of our parents. Gisele has a long history with the center. She presently has an infant, a toddler and a preschooler enrolled. Gisele understands our commitment to create community and reciprocates in a way that reflects our program's structure and values.

"So it's about process....observing, asking, reflecting, modifying, and applying . . . an endless cycle. It's also bringing community to the forefront in a conscious, deliberate way as program planners, but in a way that is accepted as transparent by the children and the parents."

REGGIO TUTTA: AN INSPIRATION TO BE YOURSELF

by Baji Rankin

Baji Rankin is an Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Multicultual Education at the College of Education, University of New Mexico. Baji was an intern in the Reggio Emilia municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools during the 1989-90 school year. She has visited Reggio many times since, as an interpreter and a member of study tour delegations. Reggio Tutta: A Guide to the City by the Children *was published last year by Reggio Children and is available from Reggio Children USA, (800) 424-4310.*

Jerome Bruner speaks clearly and powerfully when he writes in *Reggio Tutta* about the value of Reggio Emilia: *"Every community has a style of its own; each place forms a community from its own style and its own life. Even in New York there is a New York that cannot be imitated – only one London, only one Paris, only one Reggio Emilia. Every place should find its own style and develop its own excellence. The great problem is to be yourself, and we honor Reggio Emilia for having found the secret to be Reggio. Reggio is not a blueprint. It is an inspiration to be yourself and to find your own excellence and perfect it."* (p. 123)

These strong words spoken by Bruner when he became an honorary citizen of Reggio Emilia echo throughout the book. Reggio educators and children have explored and discovered their city with its intimate treasures and famous places. With the teachers' support and interest, the children researched what they know and love about their city: *"The city starts from one place which is the center, like a* piazza. *The streets start from the center and go all over the city, in every direction. That way, the people can decide where they want to go."* (p. 35)

"In the city there are two beginnings, and in the middle, right in the middle, there's the end." (p. 37)
"If you go down Via Emilia, you can get to the center of town. It's the old road. It's not that wide, but it's real long." (p. 41)

The children's words, photographs of their actions, their drawings and sculptures fill the pages of this book. How did the Reggio educators elicit such creative thinking and expression by the children in this project? Simona Bonilauri and Tiziana Filippini, *pedagogisti* of the coordinating team for the infant-toddler centers and pre-primary schools in Reggio, tell us that this project was conceived by Loris Malaguzzi in 1982. It involved all the schools of three- to six-year-olds and two infant-toddler programs. The educators approached this task with seriousness and focus while they also remained open to ideas from children, a complex task indeed but one that has achieved the tremendous results that we see in this book.

Reggio educators considered research findings in various disciplines, becoming familiar with this theme of the city ahead of time, thus ensuring

"that the topic would not be trivialized when approached with the children later." (p. 138) However, this adult knowledge did not overpower the teachers' interest and curiosity about the children's thinking and knowledge. *"The elucidation of our knowledge had to co-exist with the possibility of suspending that knowledge temporarily to produce a listening dialogue between adults and children."* (p. 138) The rich complexity and multi-sensory awareness of the Reggio approach shows itself here. In small group conversations about cities, the educators deliberately focused on *"detecting the knowledge which the children possessed and were able to express verbally."* (p. 140) They used the conversation as a way to *"generate thought"* (p. 140) and create knowledge rather than seeing language only as a *"revealer of thought"* (p. 140) or as a method for discovering who has what knowledge.

Building on socio-constructivist thought, Bonilauri and Filippini point out that each person constructs his or her own understanding and knowledge in a social setting. The children and the adults discovered and reinvented the city during their investigations. Each one of the children was constructing his or her own special Reggio Emilia built on individual experiences and thinking. This individual construction took place with others: *"Among the children, the messages were not only perceived but above all conceived; that is, literally understood together with the others."* (p. 140)

The work with children had two stages: a verbal survey of existing knowledge children had about cities in general and about Reggio in particular, and a second stage of in-depth studies and projects investigating different aspects of the city. While Bonilauri and Filippini identify the questions they asked the children, the process and context they used to find and ask these questions are much more useful for us to understand than the explicit questions themselves. Reading this chapter and other chapters in the book opens up possibilities for educators everywhere: How can we find the inspiration to be ourselves? What can we do to explore our own places wherever we live? These are lively questions in my mind. I agree with Bruner when he said, *"Every place should find its own style and develop its own excellence."* (p. 123) What better way to accomplish that than to explore with children what they think and feel about the places where they live!

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CONFERENCES RELATED TO THE REGGIO EMILIA EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF REGGIO CHILDREN, s.r.l.

*The office of Reggio Children, s.r.l., is pleased that there is so much interest in the United States about our infant centers, preprimary schools and educational philosophy. We note with pride the number of presentations concerning Reggio at national, state and local conferences across the U.S. focused specifically on the Reggio Emilia approach to education. We caution interested educators that some workshops purporting to present material concerning the Reggio Emilia approach have not accurately reflected our experiences and philosophy. In order to ensure accurate representation of ideas concerning Reggio, we urge organizers of workshops, seminars and conferences concerning the Reggio Emilia approach, whether nonprofit or for-profit, to coordinate their plans with Reggio Children, s.r.l., via Piazza della Vittoria 6, 42100 Reggio Emilia, Italy, phone: 011-39-522-455416, fax: 011-39-522-455621, e-mail:**reggiochildren@reggiochildren.it*

The listing of conferences, workshops and various forms of video and printed materials is presented by the editors of Innovations *to assist readers who are interested in descriptions and interpretations of the Reggio program. All those listed below are regarded by Reggio Children, s.r.l., as consistent with the spirit and philosophy of the Reggio schools.*

St. Louis-Reggio Collaborative • The College School, Clayton Schools' Family Center & The St. Michael School • St. Louis, Mo.

Workshops on the Fundamentals of the Reggio Approach at the Exhibition:
"Strong Image of the Child": **April 17 & 21, 2001**
"Child as Communicator": **April 24 & 28, 2001**
"Child as Collaborator": **May 1 & 5, 2001**
"Environment as Third Teacher": **May 8 & 12, 2001**
"Teacher as Partner, Nurturer & Guide": **May 15 & 19, 2001**
"Teacher as Researcher": **May 22, 2001**
"Parents as Partners": **May 29 & June 2, 2001**
"Documentation as Communication & Assessment": **June 5 & 9, 2001**

Delegation Days:
June 28-30, October 25-27 & November 15-17, 2001
Contact:
Michael Holohan
St. Louis-Reggio Collaborative Coordinator
(314) 324-4940, e-mail:
mpholohan@earthlink.net,
web site:
www.stmichaelschool.org

Summer Internships: June 25-29, July 9-13 & July 23-27, 2001
Contact:
Ashley Cadwell
St. Michael School
(314) 721-4422,
e-mail:
acadwell@st.michaelschool.org

Webster University Course:
June 11-15, 2001
Contact:
Brenda Fyfe
Webster University
(314) 968-6913,
e-mail: fyfebv@webster.edu

Summer Workshops: June 21-22, July 19-20 & 30-31, 2001
Contact:
Sally Hovey
The College School
(314) 962-9355, e-mail:
tcs_smhovey@yahoo.com

Columbus School for Girls Visitation Day • Bexley, Oh. •
April 20, 2001
Contact:
Barbara Acton
(614) 252-0781, ext. 108,
e-mail:
bacton@columbusschoolforgirls.org

Innovative Teacher Project • Mills College • Oakland, Calif. • Susan Lyon, Director
Saturday Roundtable Discussion:
April 22, 2001:
Jewish Community Center of San Francisco
Contact: Ronnie Jacobs,
(415) 292-1282
May 19, 2001:
DeAnza College, Cupertino
(Infant-Toddler Program)
Contact: Maria Gallo
(408) 973-0785
June 2, 2001: Tule Elk Park Child Development Center
Contact: Lynn Juarez
(415) 749-3551

Carnegie Mellon/Program for Collaborative Learning • Cyert Center for Early Education • Pittsburgh, Pa.

Saturday Seminar Series
The Importance of Relationships:
April 28, 2001: "The Power of Parent Participation," Sonya Shoptaugh, Louise Cadwell, Cyert Center educators & parents
May 12, 2001: "Designing a School for Young Children," Marsha Poster, Stefani Ledewitz & Cyert Center educators
Tools for Documentation and Presentation:
April 7, 2001: Digital Images, Intermediate Photoshop and PowerPoint
Speakers: Lindie Droulia and Cyert Center educators

Visitation Days:
April 27, 2001: Visitation Day at the Cyert Center for Early Education
May 11, 2001: Infant/Toddler Visitation Day at Cyert Center for Early Education
Contact:
Lindie Droulia
(412) 268-5470, e-mail: droulia@andrew.cmu.edu, web site: www.cmu.edu/cyert-center

Choices We Make: Changing Our Perceptions of What It Means to Teach Infants and Toddlers • Leslie University • Cambridge, Ma. • **May 5 & 6, 2001**
Facilitators: Dee Smith, Barbara Burrington & Carolyn Edwards
Contact:
Kerri Schmidt
(800) 999-1959, ext. 8922 or (617) 349-8922,
fax (617) 349-8125, e-mail: learning@mail.lesley.edu,
web site: www.lesley.edu/faculty/mmindess/reggio/home.html

Innovations in Early Education: A Seminar Series for Early Childhood Educators • Wayne State University • Detroit, Mi.
May 12, 2001: Dorothy Kelsie-Miller, "Creating a System of Support for Reflective Practice and Professional Development at Chicago Commons"
Contact:
Judith Allen Kaminsky
Merrill-Palmer Institute, Wayne State University
(313) 872-1790 ,
fax (313) 875-0947,
e-mail: j_a_kaminsky@wayne.edu

Georgia Reggio Project Spring Institute: Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Reggio Approach • Atlanta, Ga. • Spring 2001
Contact:
Margie Cooper
Inspired Practices in Early Education, Inc.
(770) 552-0179, e-mail: margie.cooper@mindspring.com

Recasting the Reggio Emilia Approach to Inform Teaching in the United States: A Landscape of Possibilities • Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University • Blacksburg, Va. • June 14-16, 2001
Conference Presenters: Carol Bersani, Carol Brunson-Day, Carolyn Edwards, Victoria Fu, Marty Gravett, Jeanne Goldhaber, Lynn Hill, Diane Horm-Wingerd, Pam Oken-Wright, Sharon Palsha, Alise Shafer, Dee Smith, Andrew Stremmel, Deborah Tegano & Kelly Wells
Contact:
Lynn Hill or Carla Liversedge
(540) 231-8666
e-mail: recastre@vt.edu, web site: www.conted.vt.edu/reggio.htm

Resources in Our Work with Children: Looking at Experiences, Materials, Media and Languages • Make a Mess and Make Believe School • Boulder, Colo. • July 5-7, 2001
Presenters: Amelia Gambetti, Lella Gandini, Jennifer Azzariti, Louise Cadwell, Chuck Schwall, Ellen Hall, Alison Maher & Ned Stephens
Contact:
Make a Mess and Make Believe
(303) 443-8909, fax (303) 443-8982, e-mail: ehall820@aol.com

Observation and Documentation: New Possibilities for Learning • Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development, Tufts University • Boston, Ma. • August 6-8, 2001 • Institute faculty: Rebecca New & Mary Jane Moran
Contact:
Rebecca New
e-mail: becky.new@tufts.edu
or
Eliot-Pearson web site:
ase.tufts.edu/epcd/about.html

CONFERENCES OF RELATED INTEREST

Engaging Children's Minds: The Project Approach • Robert Allerton Park & Conference Center • University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign • Monticello, Ill.
"Learning the Project Approach": August 5-10 & August 10-15, 2001
Presented by Lilian Katz & Sylvia Chard
Contact:
Office of Continuing Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
toll free (877) 455-2687,
web site: www.conted.uiuc.edu

REGGIO CHILDREN: ORGANIZATION, CONTACTS, EXHIBIT SCHEDULE

Reggio Children
In the spring of 1994, the Reggio Children organization was formed in Reggio Emilia, Italy, to support the municipality's world-renowned early childhood program. The goal of Reggio Children is to disseminate the wealth of knowledge in theory and practice that has resulted from more than 30 years of experience in the education of children from 3 months to 6 years of age. Through publication and distribution of books, articles, videos and slides that document the Reggio approach, educators can learn more about these educational principles and benefit their own classrooms.

Reggio Children also responds to the increasingly numerous requests for information and cooperative exchanges that arrive from all over the world. Reggio Children is a private, for-profit company governed by a board of directors and supported by shareholders – corporate, private (parents, teachers and other citizens of Reggio Emilia), and the Municipality of Reggio Emilia which holds the majority of shares. Until now this organization has not been open to individuals outside Italy.

Friends of Reggio Children
In memory of Loris Malaguzzi, Friends of Reggio Children, a non-profit, international organization, has been formed and membership is open to all. The goal of Friends of Reggio Children is to create an endowment that would establish a library for collecting documents about the Reggio approach and to provide funds for student research on the Reggio philosophy and principles.

Friends of Reggio Children is asking for your support. A one-time donation will entitle you to become a member of an international group who believes in the educational principles that the Reggio program exemplifies and in the right of children to obtain the best care and education possible. The association's membership fee is $35 U.S. and can be paid by banker's draft or by bank transfer (bank account # 26056/C at Cassa di Risparmio di Reggio Emilia, Piazza Battisti 1, 42100 Reggio Emilia. Members of Friends of Reggio Children will receive a subscription to *rechild*, the newsletter published by Reggio Children.

CONTACTS FOR REGGIO CHILDREN

Reggio Children USA Office for Publications
(Carol Brunson Day)
c/o Council for Professional Recognition
2460 16th. St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009
(800) 424-4310, (202) 265-9090,
fax (202) 265-9161
e-mail: www.cdacouncil.org

Angela Ferrario
Liaison in the U.S. for study tours
to Reggio Emilia
(202) 337-9191, e-mail: aferrario@worldbank.org

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Reggio Children Coordinator and Liaison for consultancy in schools
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reggiochildren@reggiochildren.it

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(at Academy)
lellagandini@compuserve.com
(**temporary address for five years, beginning on August 20, 1998**)

"THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES OF CHILDREN" EXHIBIT SCHEDULE

March - December 2001 • St. Louis, Mo.
Contact:
Ashley Cadwell • The St. Michael School • 6345 Wydown Blvd. • St. Louis, MO 63105 • (314) 721-4670 • fax (314) 721-4670 • web site: www.stmichaelschool.org

What's in the future for "The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit?
In its 12 years on the road in North America, the exhibition has visited 34 cities in 22 states and provinces in the United States and Canada. Beginning in 2002, the exhibit will travel to Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio and then on to Florida.

RESOURCES RELATED TO THE REGGIO EMILIA EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

For a comprehensive listing of print and video resources related to the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy, contact these organizations:

Council for Professional Recognition/Reggio Children USA
2460 16th St. NW,
Washington, D.C. 20009
(800) 424-4310,
(202) 265-9090,
fax (202) 265-9161
web site:
http://www.cdacouncil.org

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education
University of Illinois, Children's Research Center
51 Gerty Dr., Champaign, IL 61820-7469
(800) 583-4135,
(217) 333-1386,
fax (217) 333-3767
e-mail: cesarone@uiuc.edu
(Bernard Cesarone)
web site: http://ericeece.org/
Reggio Emilia section -
http://ericeece.org/reggio.html

Merrill-Palmer Institute
Wayne State University
71 E. Ferry Ave.,
Detroit, MI 48202
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fax (313) 875-0947
e-mail:
j_a_kaminsky@wayne.edu
(Judith Allen Kaminsky)
web site:
http://www.mpi.wayne.edu

Reggio Children
Piazza della Vittoria, 6, 42100
Reggio Emilia, Italy
39-05220455416,
fax 39-0522-455621
e-mail:
reggiochildren@reggiochildren.it

INTERNET/LISTSERV

REGGIO-L@Listserv.uiuc.edu
REGGIO-L is a discussion list co-owned by the Merrill-Palmer Institute at Wayne State University and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education (ERIC/EECE) at the University of Illinois. REGGIO-L is the place where early childhood educators, researchers, students, parents and others who have an ongoing interest in the Reggio Emilia approach to early education can discuss the educational philosophy behind the Reggio program, teaching approaches and essential elements of the program, its adaptations in the United States, and other related topics – 24 hours a day, seven days a week!

To subscribe, send a message to: listserv@Listserv.uiuc.edu. Leave the subject line blank. Just type: **subscribe REGGIO-L YourFirstName YourLastName** in the first line of the message area.

Co-owners: Judith Allen Kaminsky, Merrill-Palmer Institute (j_a_kaminsky @wayne.edu) and Bernard Cesarone, ERIC/EECE (cesarone@uiuc.edu). If you have questions about subscribing, contact: Bernard Cesarone at ERIC/EECE • Voice: (800) 583-4135, (217) 333-1386 • e-mail: cesarone@uiuc.edu

The Merrill-Palmer Institute has added an extensive Reggio Emilia resource section to its web site. The web site now includes:

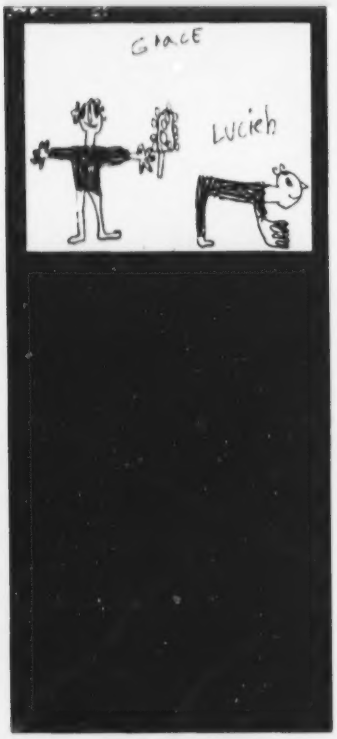
- Reggio Children information & contacts
- "The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit schedule
- Reggio Emilia study tour information
- Reggio Children print and video resources
- Reggio Emilia-related conference schedule-regularly updated
- North American Reggio network contact information
- Reggio Emilia-related resources
- Information on organizations like Reggio Children USA and ERIC who distribute resources
- information about *Innovations* and the Reggio listserv

★ **NEW TO WEB SITE** ★

- Directory of **Innovations** back issues available for purchase

Each issue of *Innovations* will continue to include:

- Reggio Children information & contacts
- "The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit schedule
- Reggio Children study tour information
- Reggio Emilia-related conference schedule
- Information on organizations like Reggio Children USA, ERIC and Merrill-Palmer Institute who serve as resources to the early childhood community
- New resources from Reggio Children or related to the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy
- Information about the Reggio listserv



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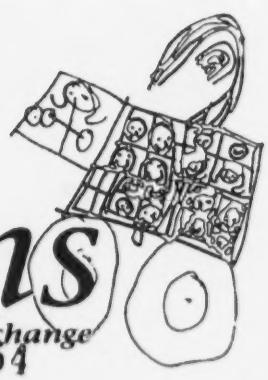
Innovations

in early education: ***the international reggio exchange***



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Innovations

in early education: ***the international reggio exchange***

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The Fundamental Role of Participation in the Experience of the Reggio Emilia Municipal Infant-Toddler Centers and Preschools:

AN INTERVIEW WITH PAOLA CAGLIARI

By Amelia Gambetti and Judith Allen Kaminsky

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Paola Cagliari is a pedagogista *for the Reggio Emilia municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools, and coordinator of the research for Reggio Emilia on the project titled, "Sociocultural Construction of Home-School Relations: The Case of Reggio Emilia and Contemporary Italy" with co-principal investigators, Rebecca New of Tufts University and Bruce Mallory of the University of New Hampshire.*

QUESTION: In the experience of the municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia, school-family relations are very important. Would you elaborate on this idea?

PAOLA: There are many questions which have influenced our experience of participation and our search for ongoing dialogue with the children, families and teachers about their expectations, hopes and goals for the future. The answers we are able to give to these questions are vitally important: What is our concept of the infant-toddler center and preschool? What is the role of public education today? Is the school for young children a response to the needs of the families or to the children's right to education? What does "to educate" mean? Does it mean to transmit, to reproduce, to perpetuate? Or does it mean to construct, to generate, to contribute to a new shape? To what extent can the school assume its task (however this is defined) in separate terms and to what extent is it necessary to dialogue, to create a network, to relate with others involved in education? In short, to what extent can a school educate without the parents and without an exchange

continued on next page

with the values, expectations and resources of its community? Is it just children and youth who have to learn? Or is school a place where we are all educated together, adults and children, parents and teachers, within a culture and, therefore, a place of ongoing education and construction of a new culture? To what extent is the school participating in the educational project of the community?

The way these questions are answered can orient an infant-toddler center or preschool toward a practice of participation for all of the subjects (children, teachers and parents) or toward a practice that we could define as delegation, transmission or teaching. I believe the strength of the educational project of the municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia is that it does not separate children and adults, parents and teachers, theory and practice. These elements are always woven together. Instead, our educational project is based on thinking and acting by means of interpretive criteria and educational practices that are not separate and in opposition but, rather, maintain close connections and relations between the rights, the expectations and the experiences of children, teachers and parents.

Therefore, in order to understand the meaning and the experience of school-family relationships in the municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia, this question must be situated within a broader concept of participation. We see participation as a true educational strategy and as a privileged aspect through which the learning and formation of children and adults (teachers and parents) is realized within our educational project. This situates us within a specific perspective through which we can examine the issue of the school-family relationship, which is one of the participatory relationships in the school.

First of all, we consider the participatory relationships of the children with the other children, the teachers, and the school as a whole, viewed as the physical, human and cultural environment. Then we consider the participatory relationships of the teachers with the children, the parents, the other teachers, the school, and the network of social and cultural services. Finally, we consider the participatory relationships of the parents with the school, the teachers, the children, the other parents, and the network of social and cultural services. All these relations and interactions are created and developed within an educational environment, in close relationship with the city as a whole. Thinking about the infant-toddler center and preschool as a system of relationships of participation means viewing education as a process that is based on a dense network of reciprocal communication that does not exclude any of the subjects, whether adults or children. It means thinking of school as a place of ongoing education and personal formation for children, teachers and parents, as a place where we educate and are educated together in dialogue and exchange.

QUESTION: How do you create a context for communication within the school community? What challenges have you found in creating such a context?

PAOLA: An essential motivation which leads each of us toward communication-that is, dialogue-is the perception that the other is willing to listen, is interested, respectful and acknowledges your capacities and competencies. Constructing a context that fosters communication and participation is only possible if the school and the infant-toddler center clearly convey that all those in the school community are considered to be competent in constructing their own learning and in

contributing to the learning of others, including the experience itself. Communicating also means exposing yourself. Who of us would choose to expose himself or herself in a context that is indifferent, prejudicial, unappreciative, judgmental or (as sometimes happens, unfortunately) even hostile?

We continue to face many challenges in our experience. I would like to share some of these challenges which could be useful for those who are attempting to develop a participatory approach to educating the new generations. One essential challenge is that of modifying the idea of the teacher, who is no longer the holder of certain knowledge that is simply taught to children and parents, enclosed in the security of an unchangeable and incontestable institution and context. At the same time, we try to avoid moving toward the idea of a teacher and a school that merely offer a service modeled on the individual needs of the families.

Another important challenge is recognizing the specific competencies of the children, teachers and parents rather than giving value through abstract praise. It has been crucial for us to focus on listening as a daily practice, to make this listening visible-to ourselves, first of all-through written notes and observations, and then to interpret and discuss these observations collegially among teachers, with the children and the parents. Through this listening which has been reflected on collegially, our ideas and theoretical choices have acquired a substance that is concrete, vital and generative. Listening has enabled us to discover the possible, specific qualities of the various contributions that the teachers, parents and children can make in the construction of an educational project. Once you discover the quality and the generative richness of exchange and dialogue (the real opening of minds) and the different points of view that others can bring into the dialogue, it is hard to go back to a directive and authoritarian relationship.

Yet listening, dialogue and negotiation can be very difficult. Sometimes it is hard to see the potential enrichment. Finding a consensual point of encounter is not always immediate, and requires personal and professional effort and commitment. Challenging social dynamics should not cause us to lose sight of the value of participation in the construction of a meaningful educational context for adults and children alike.

QUESTION: In what ways are children introduced to the community outside the family through initiatives of the school, in particular, social and cultural encounters?

PAOLA: It is important that the attention given to children and parents at the infant-toddler center or preschool be a participatory attention that considers the families as interlocutors, enabling them to be as active as possible from the beginning of the experience. The process for welcoming new families serves as a framework for our thinking. The entry of new children into the center or school involves a multi-faceted process that always maintains a close relationship between the experiences and rights of the three subjects of education. In this sense, rights are viewed not as

individual demands but as relationships to be constructed, maintained and negotiated. Everyone contributes to the construction of an atmosphere of well-being for all the children, for all the parents, and for the teachers and staff.

For this purpose, meetings are organized in June prior to the child's entry in September when the three subjects can get to know each other, exchange information and ideas, and do something together on common ground, the public space of the center or school. The children and their parents are given a bag for collecting materials and findings during the summer. The bags brought back to school in September constitute a memory through which the children can begin to construct stories to share with the others in order to make themselves visible and get to know each other right from the start. These stories also enable the teachers and children to identify common or similar experiences on which it is possible to construct small work groups during the first days of school. Moreover, the fact that children and their parents have collected these findings together to bring to school stimulates the parents' interest and contributes to the children's perception of their families' participation from the beginning of the experience together.

During this welcoming period, meetings dedicated to the single families are also organized, but always alongside group moments when parents and teachers agree on how to accompany the group of children, which becomes something different than the sum of single individuals within this new experience. These group moments, which we call classroom meetings, will continue to be organized periodically, at least five times a year. It is the experience of the group of parents that accompanies the experience of the group of children and teachers. The contexts of daily communication, the various tools of documentation that facilitate and support the exchange between teachers, parents and children are of particular importance within this process of welcoming. Also important are the moments of informal contact and celebration that accompany the experience of the children and parents throughout the year, not just in the beginning. These may include snacks together at school, classroom parties or whole-school parties, evenings in the kitchen followed by dinner together, and hands-on workshops (clay, painting, wire), all of which enable the group of children and parents to find a growing shared identity.

QUESTION: How do you develop a structure and organization in the infant-toddler centers and preschools that support the development of relationships?

PAOLA: Basically, this involves organizing the work in a way that establishes suitable conditions for supporting and nurturing all of these relationships. One essential element of children's participation is the presence of two teachers for an extended period of the day, which creates an environment favorable to relationships, a didactic strategy based on the construction of ideas through exchange and the use of "multiple languages" (... the hundred languages of children...). Essential for the participation of the teachers is the weekly staff development meeting, which offers a context for exchange, comparing ideas, and project prediction, shared among the entire staff of the center or school. With respect to the participation of families, it is essential for the staff's weekly work schedule to have time dedicated to meetings with the families. This includes time during each school day for parent-teacher

meetings and time for organizing suitable tools and strategies for supporting this relationship.

Parent-teacher meetings are held when most of the parents can attend, not at times convenient only for the personnel which, unfortunately, occurs in many schools in Italy. It is essential to have time for reflecting, rethinking and discussing, for constructing proposals, for preparing materials in order to envision and create a relationship that goes beyond the merely extemporaneous and improvisational, or the application of a pre-established program.

Another key element for supporting these relationships is the possibility to examine the new forms that now mediate communication in our society with different professionals and points of view. In this sense, the presence of the *atelierista* in continuous dialogue with the work of the teacher has brought important competencies regarding visual communication to our project of participation.

QUESTION: How did your focus as educators in the Reggio municipal program develop from one of communication to one that includes the added dimension of documentation? How did that shift in focus create dialogue and participation?

PAOLA: The participation of families has always been nurtured by the documentation of the work carried out with the children in the infant-toddler centers and preschools. However, the documentation of family participation emerged as a necessity at the moment in which we became aware that the families' participation in learning, like that of the children, is a shared process of construction and research. This process has the right to be sustained and nurtured by documents that provide the basis for an individual and collective memory, which are necessary for building a sense of belonging within these processes for all the participants. These documents make it possible for each individual to be aware of the situation; perceive the developments in the group's thinking; formulate predictions, hypotheses and proposals; and perceive his or her own presence and contribution to the construction of that specific relationship and that specific project. The documents (verbal, photographic, notes of teachers and parents) are proposed as contexts where we can pause and reflect, as potential occasions for meeting and dialogue among the families and the teachers during the daily life.

QUESTION: So documentation is the way in which the Reggio educators create the reciprocal relationships necessary for the participation of the families in the schools?

PAOLA: Documentation is a strategy that supports the reciprocal relationship only if it is constructed on the values that I mentioned before: acknowledgement, respect, listening and the expectations the educators have about the contributions of the families. It is a relationship that involves expressions, nearness, words spoken, silences and contacts that can only be made possible by meeting, being together, sharing places, times and actions. The documentation can support and nurture the reciprocal relationship only if there is acknowledgement of competencies and the possibility of encounter, but the documentation does not create this relationship. Documentation makes the relationship visible. It continuously regenerates the relationship, but does not generate it.

QUESTION: How do the educators of the Reggio municipal program create daily documentation to

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share with parents which includes enough compelling information so that parents can have conversations with their child and/or teachers about their work?

PAOLA: The desire and the need to construct together (children, teachers and parents) the knowledge of children and adults led us over time to develop the visibility of the documentation in a different way. At the beginning of our practice of documentation, the documents that were gradually collected stayed "in the drawer" as a tool of work for the teachers, but they were not shared with the parents and, at times, not even with the children. Over time, these documents (images, products, written notes, signs in the space and so on) became the structure of a complex system of communication that maintained the relationship between children, teachers and parents as the "story" and "history" unfolded, not afterward, at the end of the experience. In this way, the documentation nurtures the story, is part of the story itself, becoming a place of memory, of information, of communication, elaboration and interpretation of all the subjects.

On a daily basis, then, the teachers are called upon to leave traces of the thinking and doing of the children as well as their own. To make this process possible, it is necessary to provide for a number of communication spaces that are partially designed and structured (daily diaries, display spaces that collect notes, observations, the children's words, comments, questions of children and adults, images). It also means constructing environments specifically for keeping traces of the children's research (on the floor, on the tables, on the walls, in the bookcases), organized by the adults and children themselves in order to make visible and communicate the meanings for which these materials are the sign and signifier. In this daily work, digital technologies have become an important ally. They make it possible for us to have images in real time, to use the various dimensions, forms and colors of writing to highlight, evoke, call attention to and compose the materials with communicative aesthetics, all in sufficiently predictable time.

QUESTION: How can continuity be expressed in the history of a school community?

PAOLA: It should be pointed out that our school community has a long history and has passed through many different historical, social and cultural moments. Educational project, co-responsibility, children's right to education: these are concepts that our experience has constructed and held firm, and that denote our way of being a community. Our experience is the fruit of the contributions of all the people, adults and children, who have been involved in the infant-toddler centers and preschools for almost forty years now. For this reason, we recognize continuity in the changing of values and practice which continues to orient our daily work. Continuity is an element of quality, not a prejudice or an imperative, in those experiences constructed through a consensual and participatory process. Continuity in a participatory experience does not mean immutability, self-perpetration or power in the hands of a few. Continuity in a participatory experience means valuing a heritage constructed by the collective, in a continuous reflection and dialectic exchange between the identity of the school, its values and theories, and the social and cultural context to which it belongs, in a relationship of continuous negotiation.

A CONVERSATION ABOUT FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AT CHICAGO COMMONS WITH DOROTHY KELSIE-MILLER, JENNY SEACAT AND MIGUEL ARCHUNDIA

by Judith Allen Kaminsky

Dorothy Kelsie-Miller was the Site Director of Chicago Commons Child Development Program's New City Center for seven years and is currently a Central Office Coordinator for Chicago Commons, assigned to Nia Family Center and other projects. Dorothy has been studying the Reggio educational philosophy for over seven years and participated in the 1997 study tour to the Reggio Emilia municipal preschool program. In addition, she is an instructor at Governor State University and Harold Washington College. Jenny Seacat is the current Site Director at New City Center and the former Site Director at Chicago Commons Emerson House, where she worked for three years. Jenny has been studying the Reggio philosophy for over 3 years and participated in the 2000 study tour to Reggio Emilia. Miguel Archundia is a New City Parent Liaison to Chicago Commons' program-wide Reggio meetings. His son Daniel is four years old and has attended New City Center for over a year.

JUDY: Miguel, how did you become involved with the New City program as a parent? What interested you about the school and what motivated you to participate?

MIGUEL: Initially, I became interested because of the environment of the school. I work on the second floor of this building in one of the human service agencies so I pass through the preschool on the way to my office. I was attracted to the work displayed in the hallways. I read what was on the walls and tried to understand what the teachers were doing with the children. Once my son began school here, I talked with Daniel and the teachers about their work. I became more and more involved because I felt curious about the work they were doing. In addition, the teachers always communicated with us about meetings and events in the school.

JUDY: So the documentation on the walls helped you to understand what Daniel was doing at school. It gave you something to talk about with the teachers.

MIGUEL: It showed me the type of work that they are doing here. I could see what they were trying to do with the children and it seemed very interesting.

JUDY: Does the documentation of the experiences on the walls also help you have conversations with Daniel about what he is doing?

MIGUEL: When we look at the work, he says, "Daddy, I did this!" He is used to looking at the documentation on the walls with his teachers, the other children and with me.

DOROTHY: I think the parents and the children are attracted to the way the children's work is organized and displayed. The documentation tells a story. They get a real sense of the experience of the children and teachers regarding a particular study or exploration. The work is displayed attractively, using several different kinds of documentation: children's drawings, children's words, reflections of the teachers, pictures of the children. There are various representations of an experience.

JUDY: How have the teachers worked to develop relationships with the parents?

JENNY: There are several questions we ask the parents about their family and their home. Cara, Daniel's teacher, asked about their favorite family activity. We have also asked parents, "What do you hope for your child?"

MIGUEL: When the teachers asked, "What do you hope for Danny's future?" it gave me the opportunity to stop and think about Danny in a way I hadn't before. During the discussion that followed, the teachers and I began to form a relationship.

JUDY: How did the relationships you and Danny were developing at school affect your family and your relationship with Danny?

MIGUEL: I began to ask Danny more questions about what he does at home. We began to have more conversations. Danny said things like, "Poppy, I have an idea" and we would talk about that idea. Sometimes when I ask Danny what he is doing, he tells me, "I'm thinking, Poppy." My wife and I began to support his interests more than we had before. We pay attention to what interests him. Right now, he is very interested in dinosaurs. So we've gone to the museum, the zoo and the library to get books about dinosaurs.

The lines, hands and hair project

JUDY: In what other ways have you become involved in the life of the school?

MIGUEL: The teachers and children were working on a project about lines. First, they discovered different kinds of lines in the school. Then the children and parents were asked to find lines at home. The discussion at school continued with the lines of the children's hands. Then the children compared their hands with each other's. I think this strengthened their self-image and identity. It also helped them to make a connection to the other children in the class and to understand each other a little better.

JENNY: When the children were describing their own hands and hair, they began to talk about their family, for example, "My hair is like my mommy's." The children drew pictures of their family. Then we took photos of their families and we noted the differences between the families. In Christine's room, the children looked at their own hair and their family member's hair and made observations like, "My hair is short and straight. My mommy's hair is curly." Since there are children from different cultures in the classroom, we could discuss cultural differences based on what the children saw.

DOROTHY: Christine also asked the parents to draw their hair and their children's hair, and make comments. Then they went a step farther and took pictures of members of the school community and the community of the building. The children made comments about the hair of the staff and the community people. Our community stretched from classroom to home to the other people who worked in the building. This type of study is a wonderful way to make connections with people the children see every day. It's a wonderful way to

draw the attention of the families and community to what we're doing in the program. We don't just write letters to the parents and display the children's work on the walls. We invite the families and the community members to be a part of what we're doing, a part of our setting.

JENNY: The parents participated in the hands exploration at a parent meeting. All of the parents were invited to explore the same materials the children had explored during the month. The parents began to observe their hands and compare them with others, thus having a similar experience as their children. We asked the parents to draw their hands, posing to them the same questions we asked their children. We want the families to understand the experience of the children in the classroom, to have a better idea of what we do in school. When the parents have these experiences, we document their work and words, and add the story of their learning to that of their children. This enriches their observation and knowledge of the life of the school. It's like a snowball rolling down the mountain, an enthusiasm that encourages people to become involved.

JUDY: Your invitation to participate is a sign of respect for the parents and the families. It's also a sign of interest in their opinions and their ideas.

DOROTHY: The parents feel valued. I remember an open house when the teachers set out activities for the parents. In one classroom, a father made a car out of clay. The next day, he brought his son to school and showed him what he had done. His son was so proud that the father decided to make another car. He was amazed at his son's reaction and thrilled that we displayed his work with that of the children. This father was one of the parents who didn't come into the school much. After that, he began to come to the classroom more often.

We love to hear the reactions of the parents when they're working with materials. During the clay exploration, Shannon, the teacher, taped the parents making comments like, "Ohh, this is sticky!" They made similar remarks that children make when they touch wet clay. We even saw a parent sitting off by herself like she didn't want to play! Eventually she went around to the different tables to see what she felt comfortable with before she began to work. This experience really opened up our eyes. We realized that adults were so much like children when we're experiencing something that's new.

JENNY: We saw how involved the parents were during these experiences. When we documented their exploration, we showed them that we heard their voices. We see the parents pointing themselves out in the documentation posted around the school. This led us to inviting the parents into the classroom to study what the children are studying. They were very flattered that they were asked to join in the work of the classroom.

JUDY: This is another way to strengthen or build community between the parents and the teachers.

JENNY: Next Cara plans to explore what people in the community do with their hands. She's going to ask the children, "What do your Mom and Dad do with their hands when they're at work?" She's going to have another mini-session with the parents, exploring materials and talking with them, bringing the voice of the parent to mix with the voice of the children.

JUDY: So it enriches the experience of the children and the teachers when the parents are a part of the project.

JENNY: It is a way to pull the parents into the life of the school. When I was listening to Miguel

earlier, it helped me to understand that the key element which has made such a difference this year was inviting the parents to come in, working with them, talking with them, including their voice in our documentation.

JUDY: What other ways do teachers work to make connections to the children's families?

DOROTHY: During a project on exploring materials, the children were working with clay, pounding, twisting and poking. One child's clay began to take a particular shape and the teacher began to ask him questions about what he was doing. He said, "This is my basketball." When they moved on to paper, this child drew a basketball while the others were exploring the paper. The teacher was learning something about this child.

JUDY: He's making connections between materials.

DOROTHY: Yes, and the teacher was finding out something about his identity. She asked more questions and found out his Daddy takes him to basketball games and they like to watch basketball on TV. The material was only representing his identity, something about him that was unique and different.

JUDY: He was used to having that freedom in the classroom, the opportunity to represent and understand his thinking and his ideas in multiple ways, having the time to think about his life and the world around him in different ways.

The value of time for children and adults

MIGUEL: The children have time to pursue their ideas. There is no time limit to an experience. I think that's good for the children because they can focus more on what they want to do.

JUDY: How do you think having the possibility of spending time working and not being hurried helps Danny and the other children feel comfortable and interested in learning?

MIGUEL: This is his first school so he's used to it. For me, it's great because I know it will teach him there are some things you have to pursue for long periods of time to get a result. There are no easy ways to do things fast. Sometimes you have to work and wait, and work and wait until you get the result that you are expecting. That's what I like about the time the teachers give the children.

Another way that the teachers at New City encourage participation is through the cultural sensitivity of the program. The teacher's aides are Hispanic and they speak Spanish. The school respects the home language.

JENNY: We have bilingual teams because the majority of the culture that is here at the school is Hispanic, even though the program is multicultural.

JUDY: Yet even among one culture, every home has it's own identity. There are many differences between families and within cultural communities. Each family's goals and values regarding their child and education have to be heard and respected.

JENNY: Earlier Miguel said that there was an identity connection among the children. When children look at themselves, then talk and make comparisons with other children, they develop a sense of identity. We have found that when children think about and discuss their identity, they automatically think and talk about their family. So it is very natural to connect what we're studying in school to family and home.

MIGUEL: These studies expand their perception of the children and adults in their community. We are different people but we are all here together.

JENNY: Cara told us a story the other day about children making connections in how they relate to each other. She has taken walks around the neighborhood during their study of what people do with their hands while they're working. As the children walked to the local bakery or pizza maker, she's noticed the interactions between them. They're making connections within their community. One of the children said, "If you turn down that way, you'll come to my house." They'd walk another block, then another child said "My house is down over there by the McDonald's." They're making connections to each other while walking in the neighborhood where they live, using points of reference they've learned. The children's community is this neighborhood.

An open-door policy encourages communication

JUDY: These walks make it possible for the children to understand where they live in relation to each other, the school and other places in the community. How have you worked to create a context for communication among children and adults in the New City community?

JENNY: We have an open-door policy. The parents know they are welcome to stay and mingle among themselves in the hall when they bring their children to school. Some sit and talk on the benches outside the classrooms. Some parents come into the classroom to participate. Some come back and eat lunch with their child. Some come early to pick up their children and participate, socialize with other parents or talk with staff. There's always this sense of openness. The families feel comfortable being here at New City.

DOROTHY: When I think about the concept of comfort, I think about how our centers looked seven or eight years ago and how they look now. The lobby, the entryway of New City was not inviting. It had big counters, a reception area in

the back and a lot of empty space. It was not a place that was inviting or a place that said anything about children. It could have very well been in any office building. When we began to work on our environment, we talked and thought about entryways during our staff meetings. The entire staff participated and we even drew our ideas for an entryway. We asked: "How do you see a new entryway? What would you include to make it more inviting? What would your entryway say?" We emphasized that an entryway, a hallway, a building has a voice, too. So what is this voice saying? Is it saying that this is a place that cares about children? Is it saying that this is a place where we want you to come to sit, to linger and talk, to feel comfortable? We took a very serious look at our entryways and they're still changing. We had to think about our children and our families. What can we do to make this place more inviting? When you walk into a building and the building says, "Sit down and relax. You don't have to rush out of here," you feel welcome. When you look around and see drawings, children's faces, parents' faces, a quote about an exploration in the classroom, you feel connected. When you see fresh flowers, you feel at home. When the first person you see has a smile on her face, the message is, "We care about what we do here." This has been one of our main goals: to have a school where people feel comfortable.

JENNY: We have worked hard to provide many interactive experiences throughout the environment of the school. If the parents choose to sit and talk among themselves in the entryway, then their children can play on the structure we built there.

DOROTHY: We built a house without walls of different kinds of wood, bark, tree branches, stumps and wooden shingles. The children love to climb up high inside the house because it's off the floor, a little hiding place. There's a steering wheel and different kinds of hanging bells. It's a place that children come often, especially the before and aftercare children. Behind the house, there is a weaving loom and little mirrors in different sizes where the children can look at their faces. There are magazines and books for children and parents. That way, the parents can spend time together, and their children are happy to stay and play together.

JENNY: Also, in the first floor hallway, there's a big sand table with shells and a light table where children are welcome to play when they're walking to and from the classroom. These materials give the parents another opportunity to sit down and converse among themselves while the children play.

The potential of windows for creating communication

JUDY: I noticed there are very large windows between each classroom and the hallway. Earlier, I was looking at some documentation above one of the windows, and a little boy came up to the window and knocked on it, then smiled and waved at me. As a visitor in the school, I was able to observe the children and teachers in the classroom, and to interact with one of the children.

DOROTHY: Imagine when those hallways were all brick and concrete. One day, Karen [Haigh, Child Development Program Director] and I were walking through the building. She said, "How can we create a sense of openness in this building?" and she began to talk about going through the walls and putting in windows. I remember the weekend when work started. It was unbelievable, all that brick. But when those windows were in place, it was like seeing the sunshine for the first time

because the rooms really bloomed. It was so exciting because the children were able to look at each other from one classroom to another. Then we installed the communication tubes and they could talk to each other between rooms.

JUDY: These windows symbolically created a sense of community. You mentioned how the children felt from the inside of the classrooms. I was thinking about the parents. You're inviting them into your school to be a part of their children's education, to understand what the children are doing. What better way to facilitate this invitation than to have these windows so parents can easily come in and observe the life of the school? The windows provide a natural way for parents or community members to feel a part of the work of the children and teachers.

JENNY: The windows also send the message that we want you to know what's going on inside of our doors. When members of the community visit the agencies upstairs, they stop and watch the children.

DOROTHY: They're compelled to look at the children and the environment of the classrooms. They see adult-sized wooden benches in the hallway and in the classrooms. Each classroom also has one or two wonderful pieces of antique furniture and fresh-cut flowers that give the school a home-like atmosphere. When parents and community members see our environment, they know that someone has been very thoughtful in arranging these classrooms.

The power of relationships

JUDY: During a seminar in Detroit last year about family and community participation, Becky New discussed how observing relationships between adults help children understand relationships and feel more comfortable at school. She emphasized how teachers' and parents' interactions and

mutual respect help children to become open to new relationships. How has Danny reacted to the community of the school? Have you seen a growth in his relationships, his ability to be with other children, in his comfort level with other children and adults?

MIGUEL: Oh yes, he has matured a lot. When I first brought him, he didn't want to talk or even go into the classroom. He played by himself. Now, he's more active. He goes inside and plays with his friends. He says "hi" or "good night" to the staff members. He talks with my co-workers on the second floor now. He's not afraid of talking to adults.

DOROTHY: I've noticed Danny's growth. I was site director of New City when Danny first came to the school. When I saw him in the classroom, he wouldn't speak to me. He wasn't reaching out. But when I came back for a visit a couple weeks ago, he came over to me and spoke, and I was so surprised. He came over and spoke to me again today. I can see the change. He's seeing people building relationships, teachers with teachers, children with children, children with teachers, parents with parents, parents with teachers. He's seeing social interactions all around him.

MIGUEL: I often talk with the other children here and Danny watches. Some of them speak a lot more than he does. So he's learning by watching.

DOROTHY: He's also learning it's okay to take a chance. "I can step out of this square and do or be something else. I can take a chance on going to this adult who I haven't seen in four or five months and saying hello, that she will remember me." To me, that's a big step for some children.

JUDY: Miguel, how did the school help Danny and you to feel comfortable in the beginning?

MIGUEL: The teachers were very supportive and patient with Danny during the first few weeks. They reassured me that Danny was doing well.

DOROTHY: Parents know that they can come in anytime of the day to watch their children or go in the classroom, go into the directors' or the family worker's office. We invite them to come in and talk to us, ask questions.

MIGUEL: I was invited to be with Danny the first three days. That was very, very good. I only stayed for 1 1/2 days because I noticed that Danny was doing fine. He wasn't crying. He was playing with the other children.

JUDY: What did Danny think when you left?

MIGUEL: He didn't mind. In the morning, it was hard for him to incorporate himself into the classroom but, eventually, he overcame that. He still stays by the door a little at first, but gradually he goes in and starts playing.

The essential role of the family worker

JUDY: The school seems to serve as a community center. How do you create that atmosphere?

JENNY: When the parents come to the center to enroll their child in the program, their first interview is with the family worker. Diane, who is one of our family workers, is also a parent here and knows what it's like having a child in the school. After the interviewing process, we walk through the building with the parents and invite them to talk with the teachers. As Miguel said, we encourage the parents to stay with their child during the first three days of school.

JUDY: How do the parents respond to that?

JENNY: Some parents feel comfortable in the classroom, and some sit outside of the classroom and observe. We form primary care groups of teachers, children and families in the beginning of the school year which facilitate communication among the parents. These groups help the teachers to form relationships with the children and the parents, establishing a sense of trust from the start.

JUDY: Miguel, what kinds of questions did the New City staff ask about your family when you first came to the school?

MIGUEL: The staff was very accessible and asked questions that were comfortable to answer. I think a rapport was established from the beginning. I felt comfortable coming into the building and staying. I noticed that other parents stay for a while when they bring their children in the morning in order to talk to the teacher and to each other. Everyone is very friendly at the parent meetings. There is a strong sense of community.

JUDY: In what other ways have you worked to establish a dialogue with parents?

JENNY: The Head Start teachers visit the homes of the children before the school year begins, another bridge to the family and community. In order for this to be a comfortable and productive experience for the family and the teachers, we began to ask the types of questions we discussed earlier that would help us to understand the child and the family, for example, "What are your hopes and dreams for your child?" We want to form a dialogue with the parents. Then the teachers share some of what they're hoping for the year to come. They also bring a book about the previous year's class to share with the family.

Helping parents become true participants in the life of the school

JUDY: So that helps the parents and child to feel some familiarity, to understand the community of the school and what the year's experience might be like.

JENNY: Yes, and we expanded on our questions to include, "What is your favorite family activity?" These kinds of questions help the parents to relax and talk. They communicate the teachers' desire to get to know the child and the family. The teachers are communicating, "You know your child better than anyone. Help us to learn from you." These questions establish a dialogue and convey the message that the parents' voice is very important. When the parents see their pictures and their voice in the documentation on the wall, that message is reinforced.

DOROTHY: It is more challenging to create a dialogue with the parents who are shy or who do not speak English, who don't feel comfortable in a school setting, who are challenged all the time, just by living everyday and not being able to be heard. It becomes even more important to have that open invitation, like when we changed our monthly meetings to include parents. In the past, the teachers from all the sites would get together to share what was going on in their classrooms. Gradually, in thinking about parents becoming partners and forming new images of parents, we began to look at that monthly meeting as a sharing time for teachers and for parents. Then we began to think, "What other ways could we get all the parents together to share? We began to have parent meetings when we listened to the parents' thoughts. Then we shared their perspective at coordinator's meetings, with the central office, at the site directors' meeting and the team

meetings. At one meeting, the parents were talking about kindergarten, about their children going to the public schools. They had questions about that. We began to take notice of their conversations and build our monthly meeting agendas on their ideas along with ours. Sometimes, we bring in speakers to talk with them about concerns and issues relevant to their children and their daily life.

Sometimes a teacher will say, "The staff is discussing X and we'd like to know your ideas about that." She'll put up some paper near the elevator and parents write down their thoughts. Then we take these ideas back to the monthly meeting and the site meeting. So parents feel like they're a part of our program because we're always asking for their participation.

JUDY: You're giving them opportunities to regularly contribute to what you're doing. Participation becomes meaningful when communication is ongoing and is pursued in a number of different ways.

DOROTHY: I agree. It's also exciting for parents to see teachers doing presentations about their children. Last month, Christine did a presentation about the hair project. Those children's parents were there and were viewing this teacher differently, as a *maestra*. They're thinking, "She's on stage talking about my child's ideas, my child's drawings, my child's work." This builds a great deal of mutual respect.

JUDY: Earlier, you mentioned that parents were also presenting about their experiences in the school.

JENNY: Part of Christine's presentation focused on the parents' perspective and included photos of parents working, their words and their drawings. Dorothy just explained how we base our monthly meetings on the parent's ideas. We're also listening to them in other ways. We have heard the parents say they would like to learn more about certain subjects relevant to their lives, for example, child development. So we offered classes at our resource center, which are sponsored by Harold Washington Jr. College and held right here in the community so parents don't have to travel downtown. We have also heard that the parents want to have ESL [English as a Second Language] classes. We researched that possibility and in two weeks, we're having ESL classes two nights a week. So we're not just inviting them to come in to explore Reggio and work on projects with us. We are also reaching out to them. We're here to hear them and to support their family.

A key factor is our family workers. They enroll the family in the program and are a very strong link between the classroom and the parent. The family worker links those two voices together. She's also a part of our Reggio weekly meetings. She's very in tune with the parents and with the classroom. The family worker communicates with me about her knowledge of the family and possible means for support. We're not just implementing an educational program here at New City but also working to support families and the community.

DOROTHY: The family worker may go to the public school with a parent who does not understand the bureacracy of getting his or her child in a certain program. Center staff also attend meetings in the community and stay in touch with the alderman's office in order to know what's going on in the community, and how we can be supportive of our parents so their lives are enriched.

JENNY: New City staff have a welcoming attitude. Parents know they can come in and talk to us, and we'll do everything we can to accommodate their

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concerns or interests. So a partnership is created on many different levels. It goes beyond the classroom to the life of their family.

DOROTHY: The teachers play a really big part in this. They're with the children every day and they see the parents more than anyone in the building. They're the ones that encourage parents to come to the monthly meetings. They're the ones that parents talk to on a more personal basis. They trust the teachers with their children so they trust they can share their lives as well. They have to know that the teachers respect them.

I remember when parent involvement meant parents cleaning the classroom from time to time. The parents' skills and interests were not used to enhance the program. Parents were not viewed as a valuable resource. Participation really means doing something together, sharing and working towards a common purpose. When parents come into the classroom now, they are welcomed. I've even seen a teacher ask a parent to observe the children and take notes. When she finished, she told the teacher, "You know, I learned things about my son that I never knew. These children really are learning." She was ecstatic. She even wrote a letter to us about how children learn through play. But the teacher would not have been able to let go of that control unless she felt secure enough to believe in what she was doing and believe in that parent.

MIGUEL: When you feel a part of the education of your child, you are motivated to continue to invest more time. You don't feel alienated, like if you dropped off your child in the morning and came back at 5:00 pm. You feel like you know what's happening in your child's life in the school. You feel comfortable staying at the school and participating in the program.

Documenting parents' ideas

JUDY: How do you incorporate parents' reflections about children's thoughts, dialogue, ideas and learning? How do you include their perspectives in the direction you and the children eventually move?

DOROTHY: We document the parents' ideas and discuss them during our coordinators' meetings. We put their reflections out on the table along with the teachers' and the children's.

JENNY: We mentioned earlier that we noticed the parents were interested in the children's readiness for kindergarten so we decided to do a study on this topic.

DOROTHY: We explored this issue in many different ways. Eventually we asked, "Will the public schools be ready for our children?" They're questioning each other, their teachers and their parents. They feel very confident about what they do. The more we think about our children, the challenge becomes that of the public schools.

JENNY: Like when Danny says, "I'm thinking."

JUDY: I understand that parents and teachers have discussed conversations among the children, trying to understand what they're thinking. You have also asked the parents what they wonder about the children's thoughts. This is a wonderful example of parents contributing their interpretations and determining the directions you may be going with the children. In what other ways do teachers and children share understandings about children's learning?

JENNY: We showed a video of a child-teacher interaction at the last Reggio meeting attended by parent representatives like Miguel. We watched the teacher's dialogue with this child in which she

asked the child to do a specific task. Then we asked the parents, "Did the teacher follow the child's agenda or her own?" The overwhelming response was, "No, the teacher followed her own agenda." The teachers agreed and realized the parents understood the concept of listening to the voice of the child.

Listening to the parents with care and attention

DOROTHY: We began to see that the parents have a great deal of insight and can contribute to the development of our experiences with children.

JENNY: We observed and documented this dialogue between our staff and the parents. We realized that our relationship was changing.

DOROTHY: . . . because we're listening to them.

JUDY: They're participating in the same experiences with the teaching staff that you experience with each other. You're treating them like another member of the staff. You're asking the parents, "What do think of these observations we have made?" You're asking them to help you understand what the children are thinking, where they're heading, how they're trying to move from one idea to another, how they're learning, how they're understanding. You're asking the parents' perspective just like you ask each other. You're treating them as another teacher.

DOROTHY: They are part of the team. Once we asked the children, "What do you think is the role of the teacher, the role of the parent and the role of the child?" Then we showed the parents the children's answers. We all remember one child's response to the role of the teacher. He said the teacher's role was "to listen." We asked the parents, "What do you think this means? What is this child's perception of teachers?" All of us are still thinking about that.

JUDY: I'm interested in how you have attempted to construct educational goals with the parents. Earlier, I was reading some documentation about the parents' hopes and dreams for their children. A teacher interviewed Christian's mother and documented the interview. She asked, "Why did you decide to bring Christian back to New City? What changes have you seen at New City? What do you think about the changes? What do you like and what do you not like about these changes?" It's very unusual to see an interview with a parent posted in a school. That must be very powerful for the parents to see.

JENNY: The teacher was not afraid of what the parent was going to say because we all have a positive image of our school. The teachers feel very proud of their environment. Years ago, we didn't ask these questions of parents, fearing their answer would to be critical.

DOROTHY: We didn't really want to know.

JUDY: You're not only asking, you're posting the interview on the wall so other people can see it. The parents' opinions are making a difference in what you're doing with the children.

JENNY: Yes, and parents can read what others have to say so it becomes an evolutionary community-building process. We feature different families and children in this documentation.

Parents as partners

DOROTHY: Each time we ask those questions, I think the teachers realize more and more that parents are our partners in children's education and that we can not do it alone. They have something

to say and, over the years, their voice has not been heard. We teachers always say that children are powerful, that children are learners. We say that and we believe that but when it comes to parents, we might say it with less enthusiasm. But when you read that documentation, you know parents do have something to say. They care a great deal about their children.

JUDY: What effect have the parents' hopes and dreams had in your work with the children? Do they have an influence on the classroom? I would think it helps the teachers to understand the parents' goals and values. Does what they say about their children give you insight for strengthening your relationship with the family?

JENNY: Miguel said that when he was asked that question, it helped him to think about what he might want Danny to aspire to be as a person. He also said it gave him a sense of focus and he thought about the power of the child. Miguel's changed so much since we first met him. He is very attuned to his child. He sees Danny's capabilities.

DOROTHY: I think the dialogue that results from these questions affects how the teachers view the parents. The teachers' image of the parents is changing. They have to look within themselves to sort out their expectations for parents. I think it affects the teachers' planning, their interactions and their conversations with children.

JUDY: . . . and their conversations with the parents. If a parent says, "I want my child to make friends, to learn how to form relationships," the teacher knows what is important to that parent.

DOROTHY: Somehow the teacher has to do something with this information. If this is a child who isn't making friends, who is kind of a loner, then that teacher can take this into consideration in her interaction with this child and in her planning. At some point, the teacher can to go back to the parents and say, "Guess who was over here playing doctor with the other children?" These interactions with parents are like a roadmap drawn by the parents and if you really believe they are your partners, you have to act on it.

History as a vehicle for facilitating the school-community relationship

JUDY: How does the environment of this center connect with the community around it and reflect its realities?

DOROTHY: We asked the parents along with the family worker to create a community board that

told the story of the history of the community. This project helped the parents to think about the community in a different way. Their research included taking photographs, trips to the historical society and the library. They also visited some of the old churches in the community and talked to the priests. They went to some of the schools and the alderman's office. They also talked to people in the community to get information about this area. There are people right across the street who have been here for 60 years, who remember the stockyards and even worked there. Their children participated in Chicago Commons programs when Chicago Commons had a community center here in this vacant lot. So community members had a wealth of information to contribute to this board. They had lived through the changes in the community.

The parents enjoyed the idea of working in collaboration with other people. The research was very exciting for them because this was the first time that some of them had the opportunity to do research on something. They were amazed to find out about the stockyards and what had taken place here, what an industrial area this used to be and how it had changed. They made a timeline that chronicled this history. The parents went over to the industrial area, now called the industrial park, to see how it looked now. One of the signs from the stockyard days is still hanging there.

I had a lot of conversations with the parents since I am the oldest of the bunch. I remember the stockyards, and I remember Drover's Bank and the amphitheater. It was a wonderful way for us to have conversations about some places we knew, some places we remembered or didn't remember. The parents were able to pull it all together, to have a full picture of what was and what is now. They realized it has a history that so many people around the country know. This project was very important in strengthening the sense of community here at New City.

JUDY: So now when they're walking down the street and see a particular building, they just don't see it as it is now, they can think about the history of the building and what took place there. That adds a different dimension to their view of the community.

DOROTHY: We now have photographs of what 47th St. looked like during the stockyard days. We can recognize buildings that are still standing. They learned that Kohl's Bank used to be Drover's Bank. As a result, the parent community felt very proud of where they live.

JUDY: When the parents interviewed people who have lived here a long time, they were really pulling the community into the school.

JENNY: I remember that one of the parents, Josefina, presented the whole history at a parent policy meeting. She was very excited and really took it to heart. This was her mission.

DOROTHY: She also presented the process of constructing the community board during our first learning tour and at a Head Start conference. She coordinated the project and encouraged many other parents to help her.

Along with the community board, documentation of a few other projects remain on the walls of the school long-term. Those projects stay up as a history of some of the studies of the children and teachers in the past. It's important to know where you've been so you know where you are and where you want to go. It's good to stop and look back through time.

JUDY: There are all sorts of communities. There's the community that exists at New City now but there's also the community of the school through its history. In this long-term documentation, Miguel may see the work of a child that he knows in the community, a friend's or a family member's child. Then the families and the children know that they are a part of this history, part of a community through time, the community of the school for as long as it has been here.

DOROTHY: One day, a woman who lives across the street from the school came over and said, "I want to know what you all are doing over here." She's been living in this community for years and watching us from her front porch. I said, "Let's walk around the school and I'll show you what we're doing. Come on in." She was amazed at what she saw when she walked through the building. She used to work here when the Catholic Church owned the building so she knew how it looked before. She said, "I cannot believe it. Over the years, I have sat on my porch and watched workers come in and out of this building. Now I know what has been going on here. It's a wonderful place for children."

MIGUEL: I think it's important to understand how the community perceives New City. Many of the parents attended school here when it was associated with the Catholic Church. Families bring their children back year after year. Community members view the school and its playground as a safe place for children. They see the community children coming and going. They respect the work of this school.

MALAGUZZI HONORED

On February 23, 2001,
the gold medal of the President
of the Italian Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi,
was given to the memory of
Loris Malaguzzi, founder of
the Reggio Municipal Infant-Toddler Centers
and Preschools,
in honor of his merits in education,
culture and art.

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CONTACTS FOR REGGIO CHILDREN

Reggio Children USA Office for Publications (Carol Brunson Day)
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lellagandini@compuserve.com
(**temporary address for five years, beginning on August 20, 1998**)

"THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES OF CHILDREN" EXHIBIT SCHEDULE

March - December 2001
St. Louis, Mo.
Contact:
Ashley Cadwell • The St. Michael School •
6345 Wydown Blvd. • St. Louis, MO 63105 •
(314) 721-4670 • fax (314) 721-4670 •
web site: www.stmichaelschool.org

What's in the future for "The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit?
In its 12 years on the road in North America, the exhibition has visited 34 cities in 22 states and provinces in the United States and Canada. Beginning in 2002, the exhibit will travel to Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio and then on to Florida.

CONFERENCE CALENDAR

see www.mpi.wayne.edu for regularly updated conference calendar

MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF REGGIO CHILDREN, s.r.l.

The office of Reggio Children, s.r.l., is pleased that there is so much interest in the United States about our infant centers, preprimary schools and educational philosophy. We note with pride the number of presentations concerning Reggio at national, state and local conferences across the U.S. focused specifically on the Reggio Emilia approach to education. We caution interested educators that some workshops purporting to present material concerning the Reggio Emilia approach have not accurately reflected our experiences and philosophy. In order to ensure accurate representation of ideas concerning Reggio, we urge organizers of workshops, seminars and conferences concerning the Reggio Emilia approach, whether non-profit or for-profit,to coordinate their plans with Reggio Children, s.r.l., via Piazza della Vittoria 6, 42100 Reggio Emilia, Italy, phone: 011-39-522-455416, fax: 011-39-522-455621, e-mail: ***reggiochildren@reggiochildren.it***

The listing of conferences, workshops and various forms of video and printed materials is presented by the editors of Innovations *to assist readers who are interested in descriptions and interpretations of the Reggio program. All those listed below are regarded by Reggio Children, s.r.l., as consistent with the spirit and philosophy of the Reggio schools.*

St. Louis-Reggio Collaborative
The College School, Clayton Schools' Family Center & The St. Michael School • St. Louis, Mo.
Delegation Days:
October 25-27,
November 15-17, 2001
Contact: Michael Holohan
St. Louis-Reggio Collaborative Coordinator
(314) 324-4940, e-mail:
mpholohan@earthlink.net

Observation and Documentation: New Possibilities for Learning • Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development, Tufts University • Medford, Ma. • August 6-8, 2001 • Institute faculty: Rebecca New & Mary Jane Moran
Contact:
Becky New
e-mail: becky.new@tufts.edu
or Eliot-Pearson web site:
ase.tufts.edu/epcd/about.html

CONFERENCES OF RELATED INTEREST

Engaging Children's Minds: The Project Approach • Robert Allerton Park & Conference Center • University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign • Monticello, Ill.
"Learning the Project Approach":
August 5-10 & August 10-15, 2001
Presented by Lilian Katz & Sylvia Chard
Contact:
Office of Continuing Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign toll free (877) 455-2687, web site:
www.conted.uiuc.edu

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RESOURCES RELATED TO THE REGGIO EMILIA EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

For a comprehensive listing of print and video resources related to the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy, contact these organizations:

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fax (202) 265-9161
web site: http://www.cdacouncil.org

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education
University of Illinois, Children's Research Center
51 Gerty Dr., Champaign, IL 61820-7469
(800) 583-4135, (217) 333-1386,
fax (217) 333-3767
e-mail: cesarone@uiuc.edu (Bernard Cesarone)
web site: http://ericeece.org/
Reggio Emilia section - http://ericeece.org/reggio.html

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Wayne State University
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Detroit, MI 48202
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e-mail: j_a_kaminsky@wayne.edu (Judith Allen Kaminsky)
web site: http://www.mpi.wayne.edu

Reggio Children
Piazza della Vittoria, 6, 42100 Reggio Emilia, Italy
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NEW RESOURCES

Making Learning Visible: Children as Individual and Group Learners, publishing date: June 2001 by Reggio Children, available from Reggio Children USA, (202) 265-9090, e-mail: *vivienneo@cdacouncil.org*, web site: *www.cdacouncil.org* or Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education, (617) 495-4342, e-mail: *info@pz.harvard.edu*

Teaching and Learning, Collaborative Exploration of the Reggio Emilia Approach, edited by Victoria Fu, Lynn Hill & Andrew Stremmel, May 2001, published by Merrill-Prentice Hall, available from Merrill-Prentice Hall, (800) 223-1360.

"Including Parents in the Process of Documentation" by Ellen Hall, Vicki Oleson & Amelia Gambetti, *Child Care Information Exchange*, March/April 2001.

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THE PEDAGOGY OF LISTENING:
The Listening Perspective from Reggio Emilia

By Carlina Rinaldi

PS 030232

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Carlina Rinaldi is the Pedagogical Consultant for Reggio Children and was formerly the Pedagogical Director of the Reggio Emilia Municipal Early Childhood Centers. Carlina is currently on leave from her position as professor at Bologna University. During the fall 2001 semester, she is a visiting professor at Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri. The following is based on a chapter in Making Learning Visible: Children as Individual and Group Learners, *published by Reggio Children in 2001. This article was originally published in* Children in Europe, *Issue 1, September 2001.*

Message from the author

I wanted to re-write this article after the terrible attacks in New York and Washington. Instead, I have chosen to offer some initial reflections to preface the article. I strongly feel that the contents of the article take on new values and meanings in the light of the tragedy that devastated all of us. During these days, it has been strongly suggested to listen to children. This word "listening," this concept, seems to have become more acknowledged, shared, and practiced. But this attitude cannot be limited only to this emergency; we have to listen to children not only because we can help them but also because they can help us.

We should listen to the children, so that they can express their fears but also for them to give us the courage to face our fears, for them and with them.

We should listen to the children so that their wisdom gives us comfort, so that their "whys" orient our search for the reasons and give us the strength to find non-violent, honest and responsible answers.

We should listen to the children so that their words give us the courage for the future and help us to find a new way to dialogue with the children and with ourselves.

continued on next page

Listening is fundamental to the world famous municipal early childhood centers in Reggio Emilia, Italy, which serve children aged zero to six years. It is the basis for the program's pedagogical approach and for its political approach, which involves a democratic dialogue with the families, the town and culture. This article explores what listening to children means in Reggio Emilia.

The search for meaning

Listening plays an important part in achieving an objective that has always characterized our experience in Reggio: the search for meaning. We understand the school (which, for us, is the early childhood center) as a place that plays an active role in the search for meaning – the meaning of the children and adults as well as their shared meanings. One of the first questions we ask ourselves as educators is: "How can we help children find meaning in what they do, what they encounter, what they experience? And how can we do this for ourselves?" In the search for meaning, we must ask: "why?" "how?" and "what?" These are the key questions that children constantly ask, both in and out of school.

It is a difficult search, especially for children who have so many reference points in their daily lives: family, television, school and the social places they frequent. But we cannot live without meaning; it would preclude any sense of identity, any hope or any future. Children know this; they have the desire and the ability to search for the meaning of life and their own sense of self as soon as they are born. This is why we, in Reggio, view children as active, competent and strong, exploring and finding meaning – not as predetermined, fragile, needy and incapable.

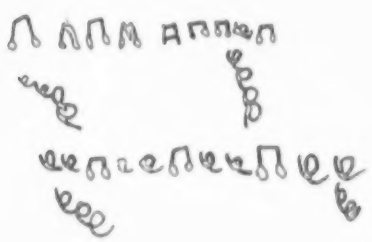
For both adults and children, understanding means being able to develop an interpretive theory, a narrative that gives meaning to the world around them. For us, in Reggio, these theories are extremely important in revealing how children think, question and interpret reality, and their own relationships with reality and with us.

These theories are provisional and can be continuously re-worked. To be useful and to meet our needs, they should offer us satisfactory explanations that are pleasing and convincing. Theories should also please and be attractive to others. They need to be listened to by others. Expressing our theories to others transforms a world which is not intrinsically ours into something shared. Sharing theories is a response to uncertainty. This is the reason why any theory, in order to exist, needs to be expressed, communicated and listened to by others. Herein lies the basis for the "pedagogy of relationships and listening," which distinguishes the work in Reggio Emilia.

The meanings of listening

- Listening should be sensitive to the patterns that connect us to others. Our understanding and our own being are a small part of a broader, integrated knowledge that holds the universe together.
- Listening should be open and sensitive to the need to listen *and* be listened to, and the need to listen with *all* our senses, not just with our ears.
- Listening should recognize the many languages, symbols and codes that people use in order to express themselves and communicate.
- Listening to ourselves, "internal listening," encourages us to listen to others but, in turn, is generated when others listen to us.
- Listening as time. When you really listen, you get into the time of dialogue and interior reflection, an interior time that is made up of the present but also past and future time and is, therefore, outside chronological time. It is a time full of silences.
- Listening is generated by curiosity, desire, doubt and uncertainty. This is not insecurity but the reassurance that every "truth" is so only if we are aware of its limits and its possible falsification.
- Listening produces questions, not answers.

- Listening is emotion. It is generated by emotions; it is influenced by the emotions of others; and it stimulates emotions.
- Listening should welcome and be open to differences, recognizing the value of the other's point of view and interpretation.
- Listening is an active verb, which involves giving an interpretation, giving meaning to the message and value to those who are being listened to by others.
- Listening is not easy. It requires a deep awareness and a suspension of our judgements and prejudices. It requires openness to change. It demands that we value the unknown, and overcome the feelings of emptiness and precariousness that we experience when our certainties are questioned.
- Listening removes the individual from anonymity (and children cannot bear to be anonymous). It legitimizes us and gives us visibility. It enriches both those who listen and those who produce the message.
- Listening is the basis for any learning relationship. Through action and reflection, learning takes shape in the mind of the subject and, through representation and exchange, becomes knowledge and skill.
- Listening takes place within a "listening context," where one learns to listen and narrate, and each individual feels legitimized to represent and offer interpretations of her or his theories through action, emotion, expression and representation, using symbols and images (the "hundred languages"). Understanding and awareness are generated through sharing and dialogue.



From the beginning, children demonstrate that they have a voice, know how to listen and want to be listened to by others.

– Carlina Rinaldi –

Children as listeners

The capacity for listening and reciprocal expectation is an important quality, enabling communication and dialogue, and demands to be understood and supported. In fact, it abounds in young children, who are the greatest listeners to the world that surrounds them. They listen to life in all its shapes and colors. They listen to others – adults and peers. They quickly perceive how listening is essential for communication.

From the beginning, children demonstrate that they have a voice, know how to listen and want to be listened to by others. Sociability is not taught to children: they *are* social beings. Young children are strongly attracted by the ways, the languages (and thus the codes) that our culture has produced as well as by other people. Listening, therefore, seems to be an innate predisposition, present from birth, which supports children's process of acculturation.

This is a difficult path that requires energy, hard work and, sometimes, suffering. But it also offers wonder, joy, enthusiasm and passion. It is a path that takes time – time that children have and adults often do not, or do not want to have. This is where the school comes in; it should first and foremost be a "context of multiple listening," involving the teachers and children, individually and as a group, who should listen to each other and themselves. This concept of a context of multiple listening overturns the traditional teaching-learning relationship. The focus shifts to learning – children's self-learning, and the learning achieved by the group of children and adults together.

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Listening and documentation

As children communicate their mental images or theories to others, they also represent them to themselves, developing a more conscious vision. This is what "internal listening" means. By moving from one language to another, and one field of experience to another, and by reflecting on these shifts, children modify and enrich their theories. But this is true if, and *only* if, children have the opportunity to make these shifts in a group context – with others – and *if* they have the chance to listen and be listened to by others, to express their differences and be receptive to the differences of the others. The task of those who educate is not only to allow the differences to be expressed, but to make it possible for them to be negotiated and nurtured through exchanging and comparing ideas. In this way, not only does the individual child learn how to learn, but the group becomes conscious of itself as a "teaching place," where the languages are enriched, multiplied, refined and generated but also where they collide and hybridize with each other, and are renewed.

In addition to offering support and mediation to the children, the teacher who knows how to observe, document and interpret these processes will realize his or her own full potential as a learner – in this case, learning how to teach. Documentation can be seen as visible listening: it ensures listening and being listened to by others. This means producing traces - such as notes, slides and videos – to make visible the ways the individuals and the group are learning. This ensures that the group and each child can observe themselves from an external viewpoint while they are learning (both during and after the process).

A broad range of documentation (videos, tape recordings, written notes, etc.):

- makes visible the learning processes and strategies used by each child, though always in a partial and subjective way;
- enables reading, revisiting and assessment - these actions become integral to the knowledge building process;
- seems to be essential for meta-cognitive processes, and for the understanding of children and adults.

Observation, documentation and interpretation are woven together into what I would define as a "spiral movement," in which none of these actions can be separated out from the others. It is impossible, in fact, to document without observing and interpreting. By means of documenting, the thinking or the interpretation of the documenter becomes tangible and capable of being interpreted. The notes, the recordings, the slides and photographs represent fragments of a memory. While each fragment is imbued with the subjectivity of the documenter, it is also subject to the interpretation of others, as part of a collective process of knowledge building. In these fragments lie the past and also the future (i.e., "What else could happen if . . ."). The result is knowledge that is bounteous, co-constructed and enriched by the contributions of many.

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DOCUMENTATION: Both Mirror and Light

by Pam Oken-Wright

Pam Oken-Wright is a teacher-researcher working with five-year old children at St. Catherine's School in Richmond, Virginia. Pam is a member of the Lugano-Reggio Collaborative and participated in the 1998 Reggio Children Winter Institute in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Pam is also a member of the editorial board of Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Exchange. *The following is based on Pam's presentation at a seminar in March 2001 at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.*

Like a mirror, documentation reflects our practice and our theory. Like a beacon, it lights the winding path of investigation. Documentation allows us to look at children's thinking through their representation, conversation and play. In "The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit and in documentation from Reggio Emilia, we see wonderful moments in children's investigations. What we don't see is the process behind the finished documents. That process can be a tremendous gift of discovery and understanding of our own practice. What are we, as teachers, doing and why? What are the children learning? If we want to learn more from documenting, we must engage in examining and extending the parameters of documentation. We must consider a deeper translation of the term *documentation*.

For Whom Do We Document?

For children

Children who see their own work and thinking documented may be inspired to revisit their experiences, to go deeper into their ideas. Through our documentation of their play, conversation, and representation, children understand that teachers value their work. This, too, may inspire them to continue their efforts. Children who were not originally engaged in an investigation may find themselves drawn in when they see its documentation displayed.

A few years ago, a group of children in my class became interested in disguising their own images. They made masks for themselves (using life-size photos and acetate) that, when worn, showed some of their true features but disguised others. They "painted" over their images on the computer. They traced photographs of their faces at the light table and used various media to turn themselves into something else. Initially, some of the children were not able to disguise themselves at all. They became uncomfortable whenever they saw themselves as someone or something else. They could dress up during dramatic play as long as they did not look in the mirror. We documented and displayed the disguise play of all the children. Months later, we noticed that the children who were once uneasy with disguise began to call up their portraits on the computer and completely alter their images. They began to trace and disguise their portraits, and play with the parameters of identity in ways they could not earlier in the year. I don't believe that this would have happened without the presence of the documentation of the children's earlier work, which served as reminder and inspiration. In this way and in others, a documented experience can become part of the culture of the classroom for all.

For families

Documentation can become more than just an exchange of information with parents and families. In a real sense, documentation makes it possible to form a community of learners with all the protagonists of the learning story: children, teachers, families and community. It can bring the members of the learning community into the school, and can create a bridge between the school and its families. I have found that through documentation, parents' investment in the program grows. Documentation helps parents see and discuss their children in the context of the group, not in isolation or in competition with the other children. Through documenting, we assure that no child is invisible and all adults in the community of learners come to know the children well. Sharing our documentation establishes a relationship of reciprocity with families, and an atmosphere in which all adults strive to know the child and support her learning as a team, teachers and parents together. The process of documentation feeds the collaborative effort between home and school.

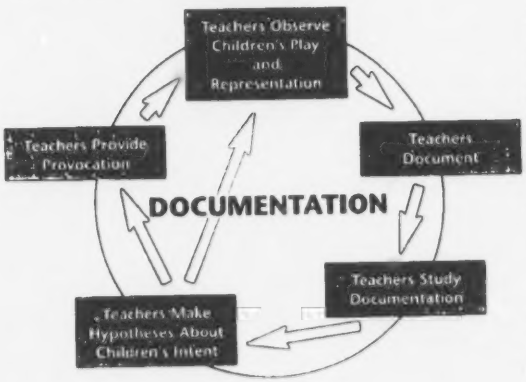
For colleagues

Through documentation, we make children's and teachers' work public. Once made visible, the work can become an inspiration for dialogue and reflection, and the focus of professional development with colleagues. Not only do teachers learn from the documentation of others, but documentation can also be an essential tool for communicating with administrators, regardless of the context. It makes children's learning explicit. It is easier for teachers to assume accountability and justify expenditures when they understand what children are learning and can communicate it clearly to administrators.

For ourselves as teachers

Documentation makes more than the children's learning transparent. It gives us a window into our own thinking and process as teachers. It leads us to observe well. The process of documenting helps us see children's learning beyond our intentions. It allows us to study and learn about children's thinking and knowing. When we have tangible documentation of classroom experiences in hand, we can analyze our observations for strands of children's theories and interests, and that enables us to plan for future provocations.

The Documentation Cycle



from Oken-Wright & Gravett, 2001, "Big Ideas and the Essence of Intent" in Teaching and Learning: Collaborative Exploration of the Reggio Emilia Approach, *Merrill Prentice Hall, chapter 13.*

We might think about documentation as a cycle that begins when teachers observe and document children's play, representation and conversation within a rich and provocative environment. We can then study the data in order to make hypotheses about the children's intent. At that point, we may decide that we need to observe more and think about the children's work in a different way. But eventually, in order to test the validity of our hypotheses, in order to discover the children's true intentions, and support continued interest and exploration, we will want to provide provocations to learn about the direction of their intent and to inspire the children to go deeper into their idea. We may ask ourselves, "What's behind the children's words?" "What about this particular idea has caught their interest so?" We may say to ourselves, " I think this is what they're thinking about," or "I think this is what's inciting their passion and setting their intellects on fire." Our guesses may not always be right. Only by observing children's responses to our provocations can we check our hypotheses. The cycle starts all over again as children respond to a new provocation (or don't!). A documentation panel is only the ultimate interpretation of an investigation. Understanding the process behind the panel is the true gift of documentation.

In the beginning

The early stages of documentation involve gathering data and compiling it into some form of temporary documentation, such as notebooks, temporary wall panels or daily logs, made accessible to children, teachers, and parents. But the process begins even before that. The first step is to set up an environment rich enough to sustain meaningful interaction: children with children, children with the environment, children with adults, adults with adults. For me, this means:

- an array of engaging, flexible materials that are accessible and ordered, from which children may choose;
- an environment that provides places for private reflection and encourages interaction;
- an environment that supports collaboration among all the members of the learning community;
- an environment that is transformable by the children in many ways with many possibilities;
- opportunities for children to learn many media and represent in many languages;
- opportunities for surprise, joy and investigation.

With an environment that encourages rich interaction, we can begin to document children's play, conversations and representation, their process and their thinking.

Adapted from log entry, November 5, 1998

Yesterday, the children noticed a "rainbow" on the floor (created by the beveled platter we hung in the window), appearing and vanishing repeatedly. They marveled in the phenomenon but did not seem to wonder why it was happening. Today, however, Janie, Charlotte, and Kristen recognized the same rainbow on the floor, intrigued now that the rainbow was *not* disappearing. They attempted to make it disappear by covering the rainbow with their bodies. Then the rainbow appeared on *them*. They tried covering the rainbow with large, sheer, colored cloths as well as some opaque ones. Still the rainbow "came through" onto the cloths.

The children heaped dress-up clothes on top of the cloths. Still the rainbow did not disappear. Kelsey thought perhaps Janie could carry the rainbow away on the clothes that covered her. She said, "Roll up in it and walk away." Janie did, but she left the rainbow on the floor.

JANIE: "But how can we get it off? I need some help!"

Kelsey went to get help. Charlotte joined the group and, later, Kristen. The children repeated their earlier process, covering the rainbow with Charlotte, and Charlotte with layers and layers of cloth.

Finally Kristen held up a thick white coat and said, "This thing is more heavier," wondering, I suppose, if a heavy, opaque object would hide the rainbow better than the filmy cloths they'd used so far.

When Kristen put the white coat on the pile, however, the rainbow appeared even brighter.

JANIE: "Aaugh!"

KRISTEN: "If you don't want the rainbow, you have to take that thing off."

And the investigation ended for a time, with gales of laughter.

Alise Shafer [Evergreen Community School, Santa Monica] and George Forman [University of Massachusetts, Amherst] have written and presented about the potential of "ordinary moments with extraordinary possibilities" in children's lives. The rainbow exploration was an ordinary moment. Studying my documentation of that moment gave me a window into the children's theories about rainbows, their approach to solving a problem (cumulative theory – the more coats the better), collaboration (going for help, for example), expectation and causality (if the rainbow was disappearing yesterday, why is it not today?). It is through documentation that we are able to perceive ordinary moments as extraordinary. You never know when what seems to be an ordinary event will prove to be a seed of something much bigger.

We document, and we study the documentation. What are we looking for?

Here are some questions to keep in mind as you observe, document and study documentation:

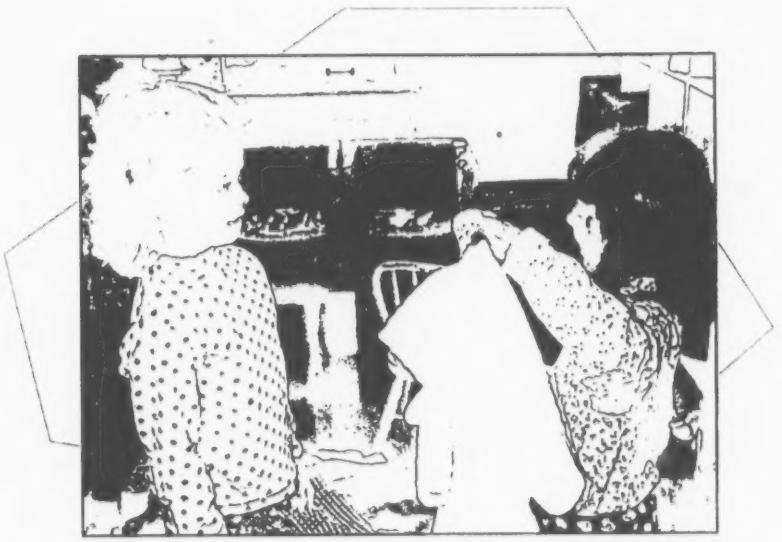
What is the child trying to do, test, figure out or represent?

What is her intent?

What is her theory?

What is being learned here?

We are looking for thinking, passion, joy, confusion, persistence, problem solving and intent.



Sometimes, if we are listening, present in the moment but also revisiting through documentation, we can know enough to support the seeds of Big Ideas in children's play. Documentation supported the evolution of the following exploration of "danger" in several ways. In response to the documentation of their play, the children reflected on their experiences, thoughts and feelings during their play, and they were inspired to revisit the play and extend their ideas. I believe the depth of their play helped the children to gain the emotional strength necessary to venture further and deeper into an emotionally charged idea. When I reflected on the documentation of this investigation, I was able to hypothesize about what was most frightening to the children, the resources for protection they were able to pull around them, and how they may have been able to grow emotionally through the depth of their exploration.

Over a few days in October 1999, we observed the children repeatedly engaging in play in which they hid from vampires under those same transparent cloths that children in another year had used to test their rainbow theories. After a time, they added layers to their protection. They took flowers under the cloths with them and played music to repel the vampire because, they said, vampires would flee from all things beautiful, and flowers and music were beautiful. There seemed to be a tremendous fear of the vampire; in fact, the children were not able to embody the actual being of the vampire for any prolonged period of time. Yet they played this scenario over and over. We documented their play, and were impressed with the repetition and expansion of their exploration. What began as ordinary play ended up as a yearlong investigation of danger.

After we brought some documentation of their play to the children during a class meeting, they extended their play with a new fervor. They built a "safe house" for protection.

MEGAN: *I think, I think, I think pretend vampires are good, but there's no such thing as real ghosts or vampires. But dinosaurs were alive in the olden days when there was Halloween a long time ago, but not now because they're all dead.*

MRS. O-W: *Because they're all dead. Are you saying they are like vampires and ghosts in a way?*

MEGAN: *Yeah, but . . . because they're all Halloween scary stuff. Ghosts, skeletons and robots and . . . dinosaurs are all Halloween stuff and I think the pretend vampire can come to visit any time that we invite him, and we can call and tell his mom if he's bad or not.*

MRS. O-W: *What will the vampire's mom do if he's being bad?*

CHILD: *Punish him!*

WHITNEY: *Take him away!*

ANN PEARMAN: *Spank his bottom.* Children laugh.

MRS. O-W: *You like thinking about the vampire being punished, eh?* Children agree.

WHITNEY: *Not going outside in the night, the whole night and explore.*

LIZZIE W.: *And smell flowers in his face.*

RANDALL: *And put him in time out.*

ELLEN: *Put him in his room.*

RANDALL: *And . . . throw his toys away.*

CHILD: *Or give his wings away.*

CHILD: *I know! More flowers make the vampires scareder and scareder and scareder.*

Months later, long after we'd thought they had lost interest in this topic, the children built a safe house almost identical to the one built in October. This time it was robbers whom the children conjured to be their danger. The children taped pretend money to the safe house so that the robbers would try to take the money, which would distract their attention away from the children. Then, reconsidering, they untaped the money, saying, "The robbers will snatch the money and run away, and they'll be far away before they see it's not real, and find out they're poorer and not richer!" Now they seem to be luring in the danger, not just protecting themselves from it.

The children took the flower-as-repellent concept they developed in October to a more symbolic level. Two children painted flowers for the safe house. One painting was to go in the safe house for the children to enjoy. The other was to go on the outside to ward off bad guys, who do not like flowers. The children also constructed a robber-trapping chair by rolling pieces of duct tape to be sticky on both sides and attaching it to the seat of the chair. One child volunteered to be the robber to test the effectiveness of the chair. It seemed that it had become safe enough to embody the danger.

As part of this episode of danger play, the children began to make plans for *possible* danger. At one point, they planned to spend the night in the safe house, apparently so that they could face the danger and test their protection. They made elaborate preparations and then asked me to be sure to leave the door unlocked that night.

WHITNEY: *What if a mummy comes? They could wrap us up with their wrap stuff that's around them! We should make a monster book. They'll hear us talking about what's in it, and they'll think, "They're just like us."*

ANN PEARMAN: *And they'll leave us alone.*

It seemed that the children had come to protect themselves in a *symbolic* way, while venturing more bravely into the danger.

Then, weeks later, the children started constructing signs of danger. They began by drawing and cutting out footprints, which they taped to the floor in a winding path. The footprints, and later, hand prints, became scarier and scarier. One child drew a large portrait of a "bad clown." Another declared that the bad clown "makes everybody sleep walk, and they think they're doing what they're supposed to be doing but they're really not." Now they were *constructing* the danger symbolically. There was no sign of protection during those times. One child taped scraps of paper to the floor and said, "It's the torn of their costumes . . . like ghostes." I suppose suggesting that it's all just pretend, and what's frightening is really the familiar in disguise.

I reflected on these experiences in March, "The safe house came down this week. And now we seem to have another generation of 'danger play.' This time the children are making 'danger' itself. So far there is no sign of protection. I can't help but wonder if, through moving deeper and deeper into this Big Idea, the children have come to a place of power themselves?" I do believe that they had.

Documentation Media

Photography

Photographs in documentation are most effective when they are the truest representation of children's thinking and dispositions toward investigations. With no experience as a photographer, I have had to learn over time what to photograph and how to recognize which photographs might communicate most effectively. They are the photos in which I see relationship, problem solving, process, intent, passion or thinking. In short, they are the photos that speak. In a way, photography had to become a language for me before my photographs could be more than just snapshots.

Tape recording

I have found that even if I am supremely present in a conversation, I still miss important kernels of what's been said. Sometimes I tape record a single child talking about her theory or idea as she works. I listen to these tape recordings, transcribe and study them, sometimes multiple times for different interpretations. The following is a transcript of a conversation the children in my class had right after a new baby sister was born. I recorded the conversation, transcribed it, and then studied it to hear the children's theories about babies in utero. Much later, I revisited the transcript and recognized provocations (indicated in bold letters) for conversations or experiences we had later.

Conversation about Janie's new baby sister
October 27, 1998

JANIE: *Her name is Campbell Elizabeth, and her feet are that tiny, and her fingers are that tiny, and her toes are that tiny, and I'm going to see her again today.*

MRS. *O-W: You're going to see her again today . . . Did you hold her? Tell us about holding her.*

JANIE: *You have to hold her head, because babies can't sit up, and you have to hold their bottom.*

MRS. O-W: *You have to hold their bottom, too, because . . .*

JANIE: *Because they can't sit up.*

MRS. O-W: *Was she all wrapped up?*

JANIE: *Mm hmmm.*

BRIANA: *And she was in an egg.*

MRS. O-W: *Was she in an egg?*

CHILDREN: *No.*

KELSEY: *She was in her mama's tummy.*

MRS. O-W: *She was in her mama's tummy?*

BRIANA: *But the egg was in somebody's mama's tummy.*

MRS. O-W: *You think she was in her mama's tummy in an egg?*

CHILDREN: *No! Yes!*

JANIE: *She's my baby, and I get to talk about it.*

MRS. O-W: *Janie, what do you think?*

JANIE: *It came in her stomach.*

MRS. O-W: *In an egg?*

JANIE: *No!*

MRS. O-W: *No egg. Just the baby. Kristen thinks there was an egg. Tell us, Kristen.*

KRISTEN: *I just think it.*

KELSEY: *Excuse me, but at a museum, I saw a little screen that was teaching someone about babies, and Susan and me went over to watch it, and it's an egg in its mama's tummy, and then it grows and grows, then it pops out of the egg and it's in a little bag.*

MRS. O-W: *The baby's in a little egg, and the egg grows and grows? And then it pops out, and then it's in a bag?*

KELSEY: *Yeah. A bag that's made out of rubber or something.*

MRS. O-W: *A rubber bag inside the mommy's tummy, you think?*

CHILDREN: *No! Yes!*

MRS. O-W: *Elizabeth, tell us what you think.*

ELIZABETH: *Because I just think so.*

MRS. O-W: *You think what?*

ELIZABETH (shaking her head): *The rubber bag in the mommy's tummy.*

MRS. O-W: *You don't think there's any rubber bag in the mommy's tummy?*

ELIZABETH: *Because my mommy told me some about it, and she didn't tell me that a rubber bag came out of the mommy's tummy.*

ELLIE: *Well, I know when my mommy had a brother, well, it was in a rubber bag, and first it was an egg and then it grew bigger and bigger and then it was still a big egg, and then it poppeded, and then it came in a rubber bag.*

JANIE: *No.*

KELSEY: *It pops.*

MARSHALL: *That would scare the baby.*

JANIE: *The baby couldn't breathe through the bag. I know a lot about babies.*

MRS. O-W: *You do know a lot about babies because you have one now, don't you? What do you think, Briana?*

BRIANA: *Only dinosaurs can lay eggs.*

CLAIRE: *And birds.*

MRS. O-W: *So you don't think there's an egg inside the mommy?*

BRIANA: *No. And, um . . . if Janie's mommy says there's not an egg, then there's not an egg, because Janie's mommy doesn't really have an egg. She doesn't lay it.*

KELSEY: *Only birds do that, and dinosaurs.*

CHARLOTTE: *My neighbor had a baby, and she said that it wasn't an egg or a bag.*

MRS. O-W: *What did she say there was?*

CHARLOTTE: *Just a baby plain.*

ELLIE: *Well, my baby brother came like on a plastic bag without a top, just for his bottom.*

MRS. O-W: *So you think only the bottom of the baby's in the bag.*

ELLIE: *Yeah.*

KELSEY: *Ellie's right.*

KRISTEN: *I think there is a egg.*

MRS. O-W: *You think there is an egg. And what happens to the egg?*

KRISTEN: *It stays until the baby gets born, but it pops soon enough before the baby comes out.*

MARSHALL: *I think the baby stays in the tummy but it's plain, and it grows and grows, and the mommy's tummy gets really fat, and then she goes to the hospital, and it comes out.*

JANIE: *She has to stay for three days . . . And she's gonna come home tomorrow, and there's not a plastic bag on her or a egg. She just came out plain, my mommy and daddy* told *me.*

REBECCA: *Ducks lay eggs, too.*

ELLIE: *Well, my mommy, well, she said that it comes in an egg, and then the baby grows and grows and grows, and then its arms grow, and then its legs, and then its head, and then he's born.*

This wasn't the end of the conversation but you can see that there was a dialogue among the children, and their theories changed through their interaction with each other. So what do you do with this conversation once you have it transcribed? It can be really helpful to pull out the salient issues, what you guess the Big Ideas might be, as you interpret them. If you think this is an investigation that will interest the children or if you want to *find out* if they are interested, you can go back to the children and say, "Yesterday, we had this conversation about Janie's baby and these were your theories. This is what you said. What do you think about this?" Often it will take three or four conversations before you can hear any inkling of the children's intent.

Taking notes

It can be difficult to get a conversation down on paper as it is happening and note taking cannot really represent the praxis and emotion as well as photographs or video or even tape recording. Yet there are times when note taking is useful and perhaps even the best way for us to process what is happening before us. It also keeps us still in front of children, which, I believe, represents a particular presence and respect that other methods of documentation might not. There are many different ways to take notes in the classroom. Sometimes when watching a child draw, I'll try to reconstruct her process and include her words as she works. I've reconstructed the process of building a block structure using my own drawings, the children's words, and photographs of various stages of construction. It would not have been as meaningful had I just taken a photograph of the finished product or even of the block structure as it was going up. If I wanted to document the way the children took things down, put them up and tried different strategies, I had to take notes or use a video camera.

Parents have also participated in documenting children's work. For example, one parent from my classroom documented a water works construction, using diagrams of the children's attempts to get the water to flow a certain way, along with the children's words about their thinking and photos of their effort. While trying to observe three or four children working together, it is particularly interesting to study group process by writing down the sequence of the conversation along with your own reflections.

Videography

Video is also useful in capturing the process of a learning experience. I have found video editing to be a time-consuming process and challenging to

display, but there are experiences that only video can capture with integrity. This is true of any situation in which praxis is key to understanding children's intent. Video is also useful as documentation for children. It allows them to see themselves, their actions, and the exercise of their intent in a new way. (see George Forman's article, "Instant Video Revisiting: The Video Camera as a 'Tool of the Mind' for Young Children" in the online journal, *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, Vol. 1, No. 2)

Interpreting the Data

In order to make any permanent display of documentation, we have to choose which photos, notes, and transcripts to use. Those choices require interpretation of the data. What was the meaning of this encounter, this child's representation, this entire investigation? I believe that one of the gifts of documentation is that it requires us to think about and interpret our observations in the classroom. It helps us to ask the questions: What is the children's intent? What is the Big Idea? Where could we go? Where are the children going to go with this idea?

Documentation allows us to chart the path of an investigation both as it grows and when it's over (two very different processes that will result in different insights). This can be done through the construction of webs. Once, we constructed a web as a yearlong investigation around "shelter" progressed. Keeping the web helped us interpret new developments in relation to what had gone on before and allowed us to project possibilities. Another time, I constructed an itinerary of an investigation around trees after the investigation was over, in order to think about where the provocations lay in the learning story.

Naming the Investigation

All documentation is interpretation. We choose what to photograph, which pieces of conversation to use, what to discard, and on what aspect of an investigation we will focus documentation. We interpret the children's intent. Naming the investigation gives us a chance to go deeper in that interpretation. What about this small moment seems important in the context of the culture of this particular class at this particular time? How and why did these ideas develop and build among the children? Naming the investigation can be a powerful exercise.

Display

The display of documentation includes photographs, children's words, children's representations, artifacts, teachers' reflections and interpretation. When considering how to display documentation, think about drawing in the eye. The organization of documentation is not necessarily sequential, but logical overall.

The Possibilities of Digital Documentation and Keeping a Daily Log

I construct daily logs on-line that include narrative, transcripts of conversations, photographs of children working, scanned images or photographs of children's work, and quotations from children's thinking. It would be wonderful to include video clips as well if you have the technology to do so. The logs document group process. I include classroom encounters and endeavors of import to the group. Sometimes I'll include one child's work when I suspect it may become a provocation for others or when it seems to be the child's response to ideas of the group.

I have found that digital construction streamlines the process of compiling documentation, leaving more time for reflection and interpretation. Digital archiving is efficient and conserves precious space. In constructing the log, I compile the data into a cohesive narrative, add reflection where appropriate, publish to a web page and e-mail the link to interested parents. Parents can have access to documentation on a regular basis whether or not they are able to come to the classroom. I do keep printed copies in the classroom for parents to read and as temporary documentation for children to revisit the previous day's experiences. I also use the printed copies with the children at times, as provocation, and I study them for strands of interest, patterns of passion and thinking, and in search of possibilities.

Some parents' responses to the on-line daily log:

"I just wanted to let you know that your daily e-mail log is very much appreciated. It allows us to talk about very specific school things with L. at night and have much more meaningful conversations, it's very easy to use, it helps me understand exactly how the children are developing, and how and what they are learning."

"Susie and I have enjoyed the log of activities. It allows us to connect to you, [your assistant], W., and her classmates in an innovative manner. The information creates a frame of reference that permits us to have more effective discussions with W. about what she is experiencing and learning in school . . ."

"Pam, I know a great deal of work goes into putting these logs together every day. I just want you to know that it is the highlight of my workday when I get an e-mail from you with that day's log. Having a glimpse into L's day puts a GIANORMOUS (to borrow one of L's interesting word combinations) smile on my face. Thank you so much!"

One child's response after she and her parents read the log together:

"Dear Mrs. Oken-Wright,
I like the e-mail you send us and I like the pictures with it. And I hope you get this good e-mail and I hope you like it as much as I like yours. I hope Lucky and Snowflake [the goslings we'd recently hatched] *are doing very fine and can you please get Snowflake to be quiet. I hope you always have good weekends and I hope all your wishes come true. I will see you tomorrow at school.*
Love, Randall"

Digital documentation pages

I think that the possibilities of digital documentation for layering in final documentation products (as opposed to daily logs, which are immediate and temporary documents) surpass those of wall panels I am not suggesting we choose one over the other. In fact, it is much easier to construct physical wall panels when all the data are already on disk, ready to be printed, than to juggle mountains of photos, notes, and other paper. In a digital documentation

> *documentation leaves the image reflected*
> *behind for as long as we'll have it*
>
> *– Pam Oken-Wright*

panel, we can include related material such as what inspired an investigation or what happened after an investigation by layering it under the "home" page. For example, the first page of on-line documentation could be a like a photo journal of photographs, artifacts, children's thinking and interpretation with links for those who want to go deeper. The links could lead to items such as a full transcript of a conversation, more detail through photographs, narrative and artifacts, and further reflection. Readers of a digital documentation page who want to know more could also link to an associated study or representation of the flow of negotiated learning.

Conclusion

We see ourselves, our thinking, and our process reflected as we live the process of documentation. Unlike a mirror's reflection, however, which is temporal . . . gone as soon as we step away from the mirror, documentation leaves the image reflected behind for as long as we'll have it, lighting the way along the path of negotiated learning.

VOICES AND REFLECTIONS ABOUT DOCUMENTATION:

A few notes about the contributions to this issue of *Innovations*

by Lella Gandini

Lella Gandini is the Reggio Children Liaison in the U.S. for Dissemination of the Reggio Emilia Approach and Associate Editor of Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Exchange.

"With regard to children, the flow of documentation creates a ... pleasing scenario. They become even more curious, interested, and confident as they contemplate the meaning of what they have achieved."

– Loris Malaguzzi, from "History, Ideas and Basic Philosophy: An Interview with Lella Gandini" in *The Hundred Languages of Children: Advanced Reflections*, Second Edition, 1998, Ablex Publishing Co.

For educators studying and working on ideas and strategies developed in Reggio Emilia, the power and value of documentation becomes more and more relevant. They become aware of this value as they engage in translating and transforming what they have learned, to renew their own practice and to adhere or respond to the realities of their contexts. In recent years, and even in the last few months, there have been increasingly open discussions, reflections, conferences and publications about documentation. [see bibliography in this issue and Reggio resources section of Merrill-Palmer Institute web site: www.mpi.wayne.edu] Educators examine ways to understand the implications and layers of possibilities that documentation offers toward constructing support for teachers. They realize that the process of documentation gives new insight and extra tools for gaining fruitful and satisfying learning experiences for children and teachers. They also see clear evidence of how documentation motivates parents and families to become more willing participants in the life of the centers or schools.

Innovations has been attentive to the subject of documentation since the first year of its publication [see bibliography in this issue and directory of *Innovations* back issues on Merrill-Palmer Institute web site] and its editors, by dedicating this issue to this topic, recognize the momentous importance and depth of the discussion now taking place. We have opened these pages to two voices, one on each side of the Atlantic. The first one is the voice of Carlina Rinaldi, one of the leading educators from Reggio Emilia. She takes us inside the theory of the "pedagogy of listening," developed through many years of reflective practice in the schools of Reggio Emilia. The second voice is the one of Pam Oken-Wright, a teacher who for some years has been conducting an excellent practice, driven by research on documentation, which has made it possible for her to share her constructive reflections, beautiful dialogues and children's drawings.

When educators in Reggio Emilia first became aware of the interest that their notion of documentation was arousing in the United States, they were surprised by requests for information about something that they saw as an intrinsic part of their work, inseparable from the rest. However, they did consider the serious intent of those requests and started to introduce to us to their work on documentation, showing all of the connections within their complex and vital educational system that includes young children, their families and the community.

What we learned and continue to learn from them is how working with documentation is not a prescribed process but one in continuous development, based on cycles of observation, shared reflection, interpretation and action research. Furthermore, as educators from Reggio Emilia continue to dialogue with teachers from many different countries, the way they present their thoughts becomes more complex and layered and, at the same time, is expressed with more clarity. This is what we can see and feel while reading this essay by Carlina Rinaldi, which is extracted from one of the chapters, "Documentation and Assessment: What is the Relationship?" in a long-awaited and seminal new book, published by Reggio Children and Harvard University Project Zero titled, *Making Learning Visible: Children as Individual and Group Learners* (2001).

What Pam Oken-Wright brings to us in these pages is a highly needed direction in the development of practice in the United States inspired by the work done in the schools of Reggio Emilia. I feel already energized by Pam's initial statement that points out the necessity "to see the process behind the finished documents" and "consider a deeper translation of the term *documentation*." In fact, what I see in her piece is the description and reflection of what we, as Italian educators, have been suggesting but can only be validated and brought to a convincing level of discussion in the United States by teachers of this country. This type of discourse will happen if "the process behind the finished documents" is examined, documented and shared by educators coming from experiences in different places in the States. It can be possible through an exchange of views with teachers who have a consistent way of working, respectful of the children and families present in each context, and where facets of the powerful process of documentation are explored in practice.

In my view, it is very useful and relevant to return, as Pam does, to highlight how the high quality of the environment sustains meaningful interactions among all those involved. Furthermore, each short story with images and dialogues, each example and analysis that Pam brings to us, opens up possibilities for discussion and learning about aspects of listening/seeing and interpreting documentation and, eventually, finding suggestions on how to sustain and support children. While Pam and I have discussed the potential limitations of terms like "big ideas," I find very valuable her reflection on the delicate process through which teachers could learn about children's possible intentions. In a chapter of the new book, *Teaching and Learning: Collaborative Exploration of the Reggio Emilia Approach*, Pam and Marty Gravett [Sabot School, Richmond, Va.] thoughtfully elaborate on this notion. Beginning with the importance of listening deeply to children, who are considered to be powerful thinkers, their advice is to avoid making assumptions too quickly about their interests. By making quick assumptions, we risk missing the children's deep intent and, I could add, we risk missing ideas that might generate others.

Children's fears and children's ways of coping with fears through play, either as individuals or in a group, have been the focus of a great deal of attention by psychologists and educators. Pam observes the children, supports them with conversations, documents what they do, sees an evolution of coping strategies, inventions and cooperation, and then reflects and wonders about the children's coming to a place of power for themselves. It would be interesting to know and compare experiences with fear and danger with other teachers. As a result of recent tragic events, we are now confronting enormous fears in children and adults. How are children constructing strategies for dealing with them? How are teachers finding ways to encourage conversation and support the children's research, constructions and group play?

Carlina speaks to us, in her essay in this issue, about the desire and ability of children to search for meaning and tells us that we should "listen" attentively to this desire and to their search. In my view, Pam is expressing a similar concept, as she is considering the intent of children, and suggests we slow down and observe. Perhaps an idea or, perhaps, a theory about how something works is barely taking shape or is in the process of being formulated, and we want to understand for what the child is searching in order to offer our support. Pam writes, "If we are able to read and give voice to children's intent, perhaps children will learn that others are interested in what they think."

This review presents the perspectives of two reviewers, a studio teacher and pedagogical consultant who work and collaborate together in recasting the Reggio Emilia approach in their lab school and teacher education program.

DOCUMENTATION AND THE ART OF TEACHING: A Review of "Documentation: Both Mirror and Light" by Pam Oken-Wright

By Victoria R. Fu and Lynn T. Hill
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Through the Eyes of a Studio Teacher - Lynn Hill

I consider it a privilege to have this opportunity to think carefully about the work that Pam Oken-Wright has presented in "Documentation: Both Mirror and Light." I must begin my comments with one of Pam's own quotations: "All documentation is interpretation." It has been my own experience that there are multiple ways of interpreting each piece of documentation. Our own personal lenses color and shade our interpretations. To begin, I would like to share with the reader the lens through which I have tried to interpret Pam's work: I am the Curriculum Director and Studio Teacher at the Virginia Tech Child Development Lab School. I work each day with children, infants through preschool, with student teachers in the third year of their 5-year Masters Program in Early Childhood Education and graduate students (M.S. and Ph.D.) who are serving as head teachers in the Lab School as their student assistantship. I have known Pam Oken-Wright for four years and have enjoyed the opportunity to travel to Reggio Emilia with her, to collaborate on a book with her, to present with her and, probably most importantly, I have had the opportunity to visit her classroom on two different occasions.

Pam's effort to uncover the process beneath the documentation experience is courageous (Goldhaber & Smith, 2001). My own experience has been that this is a highly personal and highly emotional agenda filled with awesome highs and deathly lows. The agony of deciding what and how to present the "big ideas" can be excruciating. I believe that Pam has done a masterful job of disclosing her own respectful, attentive, creative process of sharing the life in her classroom. I believe that she has captured in her presentation the most important "who, what, when, where, how" elements of documenting the work of children. However, I believe that because Pam is a modest educator, she does not do justice to the deep and abiding commitment to the whole experience that is evident when you visit her classroom. Because I have had the opportunity to see her in action within her own classroom, I hope to be able to shed some light on this elusive yet essential component of her process.

Documentation as an Act of Courage (Goldhaber & Smith, 2001)

I believe that one of the most important premises supporting Pam's documentation is the way she sees the process as a "cycle of inquiry" (Gandini and Goldhaber, 2000). She notes the importance of observation as the beginning of the cycle. Watching and listening carefully to what children are telling us through their play, their conversations, their graphic creations sets up the possibility for an early hypothesis. Discovering the children's true intentions is one of Pam's hallmark practices. "Awake to their intent," she suggests by asking yourself, "why are they interested in this particular idea?" Offering a provocation to the children for further exploration can be the means by which we, as teachers, can test our assumptions. These provocations, when offered respectfully, can be the impetus by which the children launch their own investigations, thus leading the teacher around the cycle. Co-researching in the classroom in this way sets the child's and the teacher's "intellect on fire." Having the courage to share that "fire" with others is one of the other things that Pam does best. Her novel approach of using electronic communication between home and school each day allows the parents to enter the life in the classroom. I've been an attentive reader of Pam's daily log and have marveled at her ability to describe the day - using transcriptions, images, graphics, etc. At the end of each day's reflection, she poses pedagogical questions for herself that will provide a focus for the next day with the children. She is a highly disciplined teacher who faithfully brings the work back to the children - nudging and reminding them of their previous efforts, and guiding them as they take subsequent steps. In this way, she and the children together are immersed in the cycle of inquiry and support, and nurture each other's development.

Documentation as an Act of Love (Rinaldi, 1998)

I would like to turn to another aspect of Pam's work that is not quite as visible in her transcript but can be read between the lines, if you look carefully. Pam talks about her goal of documenting the children's "thinking, passion, joy, confusion, persistence, problem-solving and intent." The examples of investigations and conversations among the children in her classroom, and the companion images are rich with meaning. It is easy to note the peer scaffolding, the debate within conversation, the testing of personal and group theories, and the willingness to work together for resolution of a problem. What might not be as readily evident is, in my opinion, Pam's greatest gift to her classroom: she creates an environment where there exists an intimate relationship between teacher and child. I believe this is the reason that Pam has succeeded in creating meaningful documentation that is immediately important to the child, the parent, the teacher and the visitor. You can feel the essence behind every photo choice and work selection. You can sense that the relationship has taken *time* ("often it will take three or four conversations before you can hear any inkling of their intent"); and *reflection* ("it can be really helpful to pull out the salient issues, the big ideas as you interpret them"); and *a culture of caring in the classroom* ("having a glimpse into L's day puts a GIANORMOUS - to borrow one of L's interesting words combinations - smile on my face!"). Beneath Pam's documentation, you can sense the abiding respect for one another that is palpable in her school. For me, the most satisfying and aesthetic documentation is the work that allows the viewer to feel the emotion and the relationship beneath the surface of the graphic. Pam effectively achieves this essential feat!

Through the Eyes of a Pedagogical Consultant - Victoria Fu

I am a Professor of Child Development at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, teaching undergraduate and graduate courses. I co-teach a curriculum and assessment course for our pre-service early childhood education students with Lynn Hill. I also serve as the Pedagogical Consultant at the Child Development Lab School. Lynn and I (and Andy Stremmel) support each other in our effort to recast the Reggio Emilia approach at the

Lab School and in our teacher education program. I have published and presented with Pam, and I am familiar with her work as a teacher-researcher.

Pam wrote at the opening of her paper: *Like a mirror, documentation reflects our practice and our theory. Like a beacon, documentation lights the winding path of investigation.* These two sentences brought my thoughts back to January 1998 when members of the now-established Lugano-Reggio Teaching Research Collaborative first met in Switzerland to explore our research agenda, before traveling together to Reggio Emilia. As we were sharing with each other our multiple perspectives on documentation and its place in teaching, Pam provoked us by asking, "What is a provocation? What is a provocative question?" Upon returning to the States, sh shared with us, through e-mail, her notion of documentation in the metaphor of light shining on a crystal reflecting many perspectives for interpreting what is documented. I cannot help but see these ideas deeply woven into her paper.

In reading Pam's paper, I focused on her role as a teacher. Whether she is documenting children's ordinary experiences or a long-term investigation, Pam does it thoughtfully and intentionally, making visible their learning processes. The reader cannot help but recognize the educative quality of shared experiences made visible in her documentation. She demonstrates that all experiences, no matter how immediate or long-term, do "something to prepare a person (child) for later experience of a deeper and more expansive quality" (Dewey, 1938, p. 28). That is, these experiences contribute to the children's growth, development, and learning - *lights the winding path of investigation.* For example, midway into the long-term "danger" investigation, Pam reflects, "I can't help but wonder if moving deeper and deeper into this Big Idea, the children have come to a place of power themselves?" Through documentation, her practice is made visible for all to see - an art of teaching based on qualitative inquiry that is constantly redefined in process. As Carlina Rinaldi wrote, "Documentation is a procedure that supports the educational processes and it is supported by the dynamic exchanges related to learning.

Documentation is a process of reciprocal learning . . It is a process in which teachers generate hypotheses and interpretation of theories that can modify the initial, more general theories." (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 121)

Pam, the teacher-researcher, in her search for meaningful provocations for the children and herself throughout the cycle of inquiry, makes prominent the importance of reflection and interpretation in teaching and learning. She artfully asks the children and herself questions about observed experiences in order to reflect and make sense of the children's intentions, theories, and hypotheses and to find provocations to further their learning. In this process, documentation serves as a provocation for the children as they "regularly revisit their experiences (and) . . . contribute to the development of their Big Ideas." As a teacher-researcher, Pam, in practicing the art of teaching as inquiry, has incorporated elements of teaching as science. Her art of teaching is visible through her documentation as she carefully selects and makes decisions based on children's emergent interests. It is aesthetic because she is open and responsive to the multiple languages, tempo, tone and movements created by her students in the process of learning.

If theory means "a general set of ideas through which we make sense of the world" (Eisner, 1985, p. 157), then Pam's tacit beliefs embedded in the process of documenting children's "thinking, passion, joy, confusion, persistence, problem solving and intent" is her personal theory of practice -- both mirror and light. Without light, we cannot see the images and reflections in the mirror. In this sense, documentation may represent a kind of mirror that the three protagonists look into and see reflecting back at them a dynamic, transforming image of each other, intermingled as they engage in classroom investigations.

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Reflection

As you can see, we have taken different perspectives in reviewing Pam's article. Maybe this is due in part to the different roles we play, Lynn, the studio teacher, and Vickie, the pedagogical consultant, so we see and interpret experiences through different lenses. Just as Pam's documentation reflects her practice and theory, our reviews reflect our respective practice and theory. Documentation, when made public, is open to multiple perspectives and interpretations depending on the intent of the viewer-reader; it is multi-faceted as light shining on a crystal. This multiplicity of perspectives encourages dialogue, reflection, and further co-construction of meaning and learning among diverse protagonists. On the other hand, we share a common valuing of the aesthetic nature of Pam's documentation of experiences in her classroom – it is contingent, thoughtful, moving with the rhythm and tempo of the classroom – "Like a beacon, documentation lights the winding path of investigation" – as if dancing the conga. After reading and reflecting on Pam's article, how would you use documentation to understand your own practice?

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In its 12 years on the road in North America, the exhibition has visited 34 cities in 22 states and provinces in the United States and Canada. Beginning in 2002, the exhibit will travel to Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio and then on to Florida.

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*The office of Reggio Children, s.r.l., is pleased that there is so much interest in the United States about our infant centers, preprimary schools and educational philosophy. We note with pride the number of presentations concerning Reggio at national, state and local conferences across the U.S. focused specifically on the Reggio Emilia approach to education. We caution interested educators that some workshops purporting to present material concerning the Reggio Emilia approach have not accurately reflected our experiences and philosophy. In order to ensure accurate representation of ideas concerning Reggio, we urge organizers of workshops, seminars and conferences concerning the Reggio Emilia approach, whether non-profit or for-profit, to coordinate their plans with Reggio Children, s.r.l., via Piazza della Vittoria 6, 42100 Reggio Emilia, Italy, phone: 011-39-522-455416, fax: 011-39-522-455621, e-mail: **reggiochildren@reggiochildren.it***

The listing of conferences, workshops and various forms of video and printed materials is presented by the editors of *Innovations* to assist readers who are interested in descriptions and interpretations of the Reggio program. All those listed below are regarded by Reggio Children, s.r.l., as consistent with the spirit and philosophy of the Reggio schools.

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Contact:
Michael Holohan
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Chicago Commons Child Development Program • Chicago, Ill.
December 5, 2001: "Exploring the Role of the Environment: A Collaborative Project Between Chicago Commons and Winnetka Public Schools"
December 6 & 7, 2001: "Reggio Emilia Explorations: Learning Tour, Presentations and Discussion on Documentation"
Materials Workshops:
February 8, 2002: Recyclables
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March 6, 2002: Wire
May 2 & 3, 2002: "Reggio Emilia Explorations: Learning Tour, Presentations and Discussion on Learning Environments"
Contact:
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Innovations in Early Education: A Seminar Series for Early Childhood Educators • Merrill-Palmer Institute, Wayne State University • Detroit, Mi.
December 8, 2001: Lynn White, "Creating Environments that Support Children's Learning"
February 2, 2001: Chicago Commons Child Development Program Educators, "The Role of Observation, Interpretation and Documentation in the Evolution of Learning and Curriculum Development"
May 4, 2001: Brenda Fyfe, "The Relationship Between Documentation and Assessment"
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